Shadows of the Night by BCI603

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Summary: It's been seven months since the gate was closed once again, since Billy and Hopper died. Four months since the Byers and El left town. Friendships and relationships are tested. Some even have a 50/50 chance at staying together. Valentine's Day is supposed to be all about love, isn't it? Well... not so much.

1. Chapter One

This is my attempt at a Stranger Things Season 4, and I hope you guys like it!

Chapter One: A Rehash of Crazy Friends

Thursday, July 4, 1985

"No," El whispered, when she saw Joyce and Will hugging, but no sign of Hopper. Joyce looked at her and seemed to cry harder, and she knew. He was gone. "No, no!" she fell to her knees and screamed. The sound echoed in the night, some even hearing it over the sirens.

"EL!" Mike yelled, tossing the blanket off him and running towards her.

"El, El, what is it? What's wrong?"

"No, no, no, NO." she sobbed. "Gone! He's gone!" she wailed.

Mike sank to his knees in front of her, taking her hands in his and pulling her close to him.

"Who? Who's gone?"

"My d-dad!" she cried. "No, no, no, he can't be." she shook her head.

"El… I am so… so sorry." Joyce said quietly, her and El let out another heart breaking wail before completely burying herself in Mike's arms. He hugged her tight, a hand tangled in her hair on the back of her head comfortingly. He looked up at the sky as he whispered soothing words in her ear, silent tears falling down his face.

Hours later, everyone was at the hospital getting checked out. Mike and El both were in the process of getting stitches- Mike needed a couple for the small gash on his nose and under his eye, and El needed… a lot, for the gashes on her leg, and a butterfly stitch on her

forehead. They were all in one one room, multiple beds with curtains separating. Steve was passed out in his bed, Dustin and Robin in the room with him. They were both fine, other than the drug that had already come from Robin's system. Max and Lucas sat in chairs between Mike and El's beds, Lucas holding a bag of ice to Max's cheek. Nancy stood on the other side of her brother, letting him squeeze her hand while the nurse put the stitches in, and Will and Jonathan stood with El, doing exactly what Nancy was doing. Everyone had gotten checked for injuries, and the worst one was El's leg, of course.

Erica was with Joyce and Murray, asking Dr. Owens questions, her mouth running a mile a minute. Eventually, though, Lucas forced his sister to go sit with Dustin and Robin, at the foot of Steve's bed.

A while later, when there were no nurses or doctors in the room, Dustin let out a loud sigh, drawing the attention of everyone in the room.

"Are we gonna talk about it?" he asked.

"How you and your girlfriends performance that costs us…" Max started, but trailed off.

"No, we're not speaking of that again." he retorted.

"We'll talk about it in the coming days." Murray said. "We all just need a rest for now. You kids especially. Plus, I hear some *very* worried voices coming from down the hall, so you best prepare yourselves for the onslaught of worried parents."

"Lucas and Erica Sinclair…" Mrs. Sinclair didn't waste a second, yanking her children out of the room and into the hallway, where their dad was waiting.

"Oh my Dusty, you're so dirty! What on earth happened?" Claudia gasped, poking and prodding at her only son.

"Where is that shithead of a son of mine?" Neil growled as he stalked towards Max, who instinctively backed up into the wall, eyes filled with fear even as she glared. "And why isn't he with you?" he

demanded.

"He's dead." Max spit. Neil's eyes widened ever so slightly and Susan gasped.

"You're lying." he hissed.

"No, I'm not." she hissed back. "Your son is dead. He saved me and my friends."

"He wouldn't do that." Neil chuckled humorlessly. "Not my son."

"You mean the son that you abused?" Mike asked. Neil's eyes snapped towards the young teen, who's *had* it at this point.

"Excuse me?" Neil zeroed in on him. Mike stared back, eyes dark.

"He sure didn't take a page out of your book, Mr. Hargrove." Mike said, eerily calm. The young teen crossed his arms, sitting up straight in his chair. "He was an absolute asshole, tried to hit us with his car, yeah, but he redeemed himself tonight. If it weren't for him, we'd *all* be dead. I take it he didn't get the good in him from you."

"Chill, Mike." Max said, shaking her head at him and giving him a look.

"Yeah that's a no." Mike said, looking at her. He turned back to Neil, who looked like he was ready to throw Mike out the window. "You're a pathetic excuse for a father. You deserve anything and everything coming for you, and believe me, it's a *lot* . And you." Mike rounded on Susan, who's eyes widened. "The fact that you stay with this son of a bitch, *knowing* he's abusive to his son- *was* abusive- and *scares your daughter* makes you just as bad."

Mike stood up, glanced around the room, and looked at El, "I'll be back soon." he told her softly. She looked like she wanted to argue, but nodded. With a defiant stare, Mike pushed past Neil and Susan, praying to God that Neil didn't actually try and attack him. The second he was out of the room, he let out a breath and made his way to the- now empty- waiting room.

He fully intended on going back the second he knew the Hargroves

were gone. But then… Karen Wheeler arrived, and he ended up with a massive headache and an urge to punch anything and everything- and needing a hug from his mom, of course, but that's besides the point.

One week later

Friday, July 12, 1985

The funeral for Hopper was a big one, a lot more people than anyone expected showed up. Many people hugged El and gave their condolences, to which she hardly responded to. She hadn't talked much since that night. Losing Hopper, her powers, everything was vastly different from what she was used to, and she didn't know how to handle it.

"Is there *any* way he could've survived the blast?" Mike asked quietly, glancing in the living room at his- at El, who was lying on the couch, her head in Max's lap and legs in Dustin's. The cabin was destroyed, now, so El had been staying with the Byers. Nancy, Steve and Jonathan had gone back to the cabin a few days later and packed up everything that could be salvaged. Most of El's room was fine, surprisingly, and Hoppers, well, it took them awhile but they're pretty sure they got everything he owned out of there.

"I don't… I don't know. The others there, they… they were vaporized." he sighed and nodded. El got up off the floor and slowly made her way to her room with her crutches- which she absolutely hated. Will had moved into Jonathan's room in the short week she'd been there. He looked at Joyce and she nodded, and he followed her, knocking on the door frame as she carefully sat on her bed and put her leg on another pillow.

"Hey," he nearly whispered. "can I come in?" she nodded, and patted the space next to her. He crawled on the bed next to her and they sat in silence for a few moments.

"You know I… I'd look for him. If I could." she said, finally. "Just to see if he's… somewhere, *anywhere* . But I can't." she bit her lip, pausing for a minute, as if debating what to say next. She sighed,

"Benny died because of me. He helped me and got a bullet, right here." she pointed at her forehead.

"El…"

"You took me in for a week and… I changed your life for the *worst* . You could have died because of me-"

"El, no it wasn't your fault."

"He told me, Mike… He *told* me that I saved him from the black hole." she gasped, continuing. "And it came back- it came back and *it took him away from me* ! A black hole that *I created* , me," she pointed at herself, "it took him, and I-I hate myself. I couldn't save him from the black hole. Not this time."

"That wasn't your fault!" Mike yelled over her loud accusations of herself. "None of it was your fault, El. You didn't mean to open that… black hole. You didn't want any of this to happen, to anyone."

"He was the only dad I ever really had." she whispered, face crumbling. "And he's gone because he saved *me*from my *own black hole* ."

"He saved all of us. Hopper died a hero, El. That's what he's always been, a hero." he placed his hand on her cheek, making her look at him. "Hopper is a hero. He would have risked his life for anyone, even me- even though I was the biggest douche to him." she stared at him for a second.

"Douche?" she sniffed.

"Uh, I'll explain that later. But… El, you tried your best and you saved us, so many times. Even though you did open that gate, you've proven time and time again that you didn't want to, that you wanted everyone safe. You even sacrificed yourself, El, and saved *so* many people."

"It still hurts." she cried. "He can't yell at us to turn the music down, to- to leave the door open thr-three inches."

"I know, El. I know." Mike pulled her into his arms and hugged her as

she sobbed. "I know."

One month later

Saturday, August 17, 1985

"We have to tell you something." Will said, as he and El walked into Mike's basement.

"You're not wasting time then." Dustin snickered.

"What's wrong?" Mike asked, sitting up on the couch.

"How do you know something's wrong?" Max asked him, raising an eyebrow.

"I know my- I know El better than any of you. Will too." he replied, completely ignoring her and turning his attention to the two.

"He's right, it's… not good news." Will said.

"Who died?" Lucas asked. Both Mike and Max threw a pillow at him.

"I'm breaking up with you again."

"Dammit, that's the seventh time."

"Stop being a dumbass."

"Guys." Will said, shaking his head. "Seriously."

"What is it?" Mike asked. El walked over and sat next to him on the couch, bending her good leg and resting her chin on it. The cuts have healed for the most part on her other leg, but it still tugs and burns when she moves it wrong. Will sat in one of the D&D chairs and scratched the back of his neck.

"Mom talked to us today, me, El and Jonathan and told us that… she put the house on the- the market a few months ago and…" he paused and looked around at the room, tearing up as he saw the looks of realization come onto their faces

"You're moving." Mike asked softly.

"Yes." El nodded.

"Where to?" Max asked.

"Elgin, Illinois." Will replied.

"Three hours and 24 minutes away on a good day." El sighed.

"You don't seem all too surprised or upset, Wheeler. What's your deal?" Max asked, eyebrows raised.

"My mom saw you guys house in the newspaper last month." he said, looking at them. "And said something about it to me, thinking I knew."

"Why didn't you say anything?" El asked him.

"I didn't want to." Mike replied, shrugging. "It's your guys' news, I didn't want to tell everyone before you did."

"Oh."

"Well, at least you didn't lie like a bag of assholes this time." Max said, rolling her eyes. Mike stared at her for a few seconds.

"There's the goddamn door." he pointed at it. "Use it." he stood, and without looking at anyone, stormed up the stairs, slamming the door behind him. They faintly heard Karen yell "Michael!" along with Mike's "I don't give a*shit* !"

"Really, Max?" Dustin huffed, crossing his arms. "Really?"

"What?" she asked, confused.

"Mike made one mistake. *One* ." he replied. "And you won't shut your damn mouth about it."

"One mistake? Really?" she retorted, crossing her arms as well. "As far as I'm concerned, not only did he lie to El, but he tried to control her and her powers, wouldn't let her hang out with us-"

"El had a say so in all that, didn't you, El?" Will piped up. Max raised an eyebrow. El glanced at Max and nodded. "Mike has always wanted what's best for El, since the night he met her."

"He didn't want her to get in trouble with… And he didn't want her to hurt herself using her powers," Dustin said.

"Mike said he wanted me all to himself." El commented and they looked at each other. "At the mall. But he apologized to me. Then he told me he was scared I'd leave him. Again." tears welled up in her eyes. "I would never leave Mike. Not on purpose."

"You mean you'd never *really* break up with him?" Will asked. She nodded.

"Yes. I love him."

"Oh."

"We already knew this." Dustin waved Will off. He chuckled. Lucas was frowning at Max, who still looked pissed.

"I'm gonna go check on… Mike." El said, standing and leaving the basement, shutting the door softly behind her.

"Max." Lucas started. "You might get mad at me for this, but I'm gonna tell you like it is."

"Oh God." she rolled her eyes.

"The fact that *you* treat Mike like he's a piece of shit really bothers me. And you know *why* ?"

"Why?"

"He stood up for you."

"He didn't have to do that."

"No, he didn't. That's the point, he didn't have to, but he *did* . But despite the fact that he's redeemed himself for the way he acted last year- you've given him absolute shit. When Billy hit you you-"

"That wasn't Billy." she replied harshly.

"When the *Mind Flayer* hit you and knocked you out," he corrected, "Mike moved towards him like he was gonna get him back for it, you know? But he was thrown into the damn pipes, was knocked out, and now has a scar on his face to show for it."

Dustin and Will just watched from the other side of the room, glancing at each other.

"And at the hospital, when your mom and Neil showed up? He knew you were scared of Neil, and he told him off to get him away from you. And all he got from you was *chill, Mike* ." Lucas mocked. "No thank you, no nothing. So if anyone here has made mistakes, it's you. We've all made them. Hell, the smallest mistake I make, you break up with me. And you know what?" Lucas chuckled a little. "We're done, for good. You don't get to try and hurt me over and over again because I make mistakes or do something you don't like. If anyone here is controlling, it's you."

"Holy shit." Dustin whispered to Will, who gave him a look that showed the exact same thing Dustin was feeling.

"So until *you* get your head out of your *ass* , you're out of the party." Lucas let his arms drop, pointing at the door. "As my best friend said, *there's the door* ." Max stared at him for a few seconds, before glancing at her bag and nodding.

"Fine, okay." she grabbed anything she'd taken out of it, stuffed it in there and left quickly.

It was quiet for a few minutes, and finally, Will asked, "You okay?"

"Yeah." Lucas snorted. "I'm fine. I'm tired of her being a bitch and breaking up with me just for the hell of it. I swear she gets off on it."

"What does that mean?" El asked, she and Mike popping up out of seemingly nowhere. Lucas shrieked and Dustin and Will laughed.

"What does what mean?" Lucas grumbled, plopping down angrily.

"She gets off on it."

"Oh, yeah, that's not important." Mike told El, shaking his head. "It's a saying I'd rather you not know right now." she furrowed her brows but shrugged, nodding.

"Where is Max?"

"She left." Lucas replied.

"After he made her leave. He went off on her, dude." Dustin said. "That's best friend material right here." he clapped Lucas on the shoulder. Mike raised his eyebrows at them.

"I got tired of her talking shit about you. So, I talked shit to her about how she didn't even say thank you for what you did at the mall. Well, *tried* to do, but it still counts. And then again at the hospital. I broke up with her."

"Did you guys get back together within the ten minutes we were gone?" Mike asked, making a face. El giggled.

"No, I said we were done for good."

"He also said that until she gets her head out of her ass, she's out of the party." Will added. Lucas nodded. Dustin grinned and bounced in his seat a little, and said,

"It was awesome. And well deserved. I love Max, she's like a sister, but *she* needed to chill the hell out."

"And you wonder why I didn't want her in the party to begin with." Mike shook his head.

"I still like her." El said, shrinking away a little when they looked at her. "Not because of what she's said about you." she shook her head. "I'd throw her off her skateboard again if I could." Mike couldn't help but grin at that.

"That'd be nice."

"We had fun together. When we weren't talking about boys. She showed me her comic books and danced to music with me."

"You can still be friends with her, El." Mike told her. "Just because we don't wanna be anymore doesn't mean you can't. That's your choice." she nodded, biting her lip.

"Just don't let her convince you boys suck, us especially. We're not like Neil and Billy were."

"Oh hell no." El spit out. "You can never be like them. I won't let you." Dustin couldn't help but giggle a little when she said hell.

"Oh so you're swearing now?" Mike raised an eyebrow at her, grinning a little.

"I deserve to be able to." she replied, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear, grinning at him.

"Hell yeah you do." he agreed.

Dustin was digging through one of Mike's boxes, looking for a comic to read so he could ignore their love fest, when he realized something, dropping the stack in his hands and looking at El, "Max read comic books?"

"Yes. Girl power."

Two months later

Saturday, October 19, 1985

"It's really freaking stupid and pisses me off!" Mike exclaimed, throwing a pillow at the wall and face planting on his bed. Nancy sighed as she listened to her brother rant, even though it was muffled now. She sat in his desk chair and rolled closer to the bed, propping her feet up on his ass. He lifted his head up and looked at her. "Really?"

"Yes, really. Mike, I know it sucks that they're leaving next week. How do you think I feel? *My* boyfriend is moving three hours away too. It's not just Will and El."

"Yeah, and you don't have a best friend that's moving that you've

known since kindergarten."

"No, my best friend is dead." she replied, crossing her arms. His expression softened.

"You know I wasn't…"

"I know. It's not like we won't get to see them again. Mom has already given us permission to go have Thanksgiving with them and spend our break with them. And Jonathan told me that he and the other two menaces were going to try and convince Mrs. Byers to come back for Christmas." she told him. "Yes it sucks. Like incredibly sucks, but Mrs. Byers made up her mind months ago that they were moving, and she's already paid for the house. There's no changing her mind. And honestly… I think they need to leave town for a while, after all that's happened, you know?" Mike just grumbled to himself and buried his face in his comforter. "El too. I can just imagine how she feels every time they pass the mall on the way to and from school."

"But buying a house is *permanent* , Nancy."

"I'm aware."

"And Elgin is three hours away. Even if they visit a lot, they'll eventually stop coming home and Will will find a new group of friends and a new best friend that he likes more and El… she'll get actual girl friends- which is a good thing- and they'll hang out and shit and meet new guys and El will probably just forget about my lanky, frog looking ass."

Nancy stared at her brother as he sat up, huffed and punched his mattress, and snorted. He glared at her.

"This isn't funny, Nancy!" he exclaimed. " *You* and Jonathan can *both* drive and me and El and Will can't yet. It's not fair." he crossed his arms.

"Mike, you of all people oughta know by now that life isn't fair." she told him. "Besides, you know damn well that if Jon or I go there or here we'll bring you or Will and El with us to visit."

"I hope you know that the average person wouldn't understand a damn thing you just said." she chuckled.

"You know what I mean though, right? If one or the other goes, you or El and Will go too." he nodded.

"Duh. But still, like mom and dad will actually let us go a lot."

"God, you're such a pessimist."

"Nancy, we *all* know by now that that's who I am. None of you have accepted it yet." Nancy rolled her eyes at her little brother.

"Dramatic too."

"Everyone's accepted *that* ." he retorted. She grabbed a pillow off the floor and hit him with it. He threw it back at her, smacking her face.

"You little asshole!" she gasped, standing up and grabbing the pillow again, smacking him repeatedly with it as he laughed.

Saturday, October 26, 1985

"I love you too."

Mike felt like such an idiot as El walked away from him, hugging the teddy bear close to her. She *heard* him that night at the cabin- of course she did, the walls were thin and he was pretty much yelling like the loud, dramatic teen he was.

He couldn't explain how happy it made him, though, that she loved him back. *Really* loved him. He didn't care about the teasing the Party and Max threw his way because of the cheesy grin on his face. Max was helping out only because El requested her to, and so they could say goodbye. No one except El and Will really talked to her still- though Mike heard Max and Lucas singing that stupid song Dustin had apparently sung on the supercom together, like nothing had really changed.

The only people really missing, now, other than the obvious, was Steve, Robin and Erica. Erica would rather not say goodbye to the

two she'd grown to love, and Robin and Steve had come and said goodbye the day prior, and were out looking for new jobs together.

"If you get the job, take it." Steve told the girl, who rolled her eyes.

"Look, I'd much rather work with you than Cheeto Fingers back there."

"Wow, I'm better than that disgusting piece of cheeto dust?"

"A lot better." she chuckled. "Besides, all things considered, it was pretty fun working with you, so I think it'd be fun to work together again."

"Really?" he asked.

"Yes, really. Stop acting so surprised, Dingus." he stuck his tongue out at her. They walked down the sidewalk, looking at the windows at shops, looking to see if there was anywhere hiring.

Suddenly, Steve let out a dramatic gasp and ripped off a poster that was on the door of Melvald's.

"Melvald's! How stupid can I be? Since the Byers are… leaving, I'm sure Mr. what's his name needs a new worker or two!"

"Steve." Robin face palmed. "Mr. what's his name *owns* the store. The store is *named* after him."

"Oh. Is it really?"

"Yes, Dingus, really! But you are right, so let's go and see about that job."

Twenty- embarrassing- minutes later, the two walked out of Melvald's with the promise of beginning work training on Monday.

"I don't mean to ruin the mood but… I wonder how the little shits are doing." Steve said as he and Robin got into his car. His dad had thankfully had a spare set of keys, and Steve was told that if he lost this pair he had to figure out a ride on his own.

"Probably not good." she replied. "I feel bad for them. All of them."

"Me too. I know little Wheeler is probably completely heartbroken right now. He and El just can't be happy, it seems like."

"Well, life isn't always happy. They know that, by now. It'll all change one day. If the long distance works, well… I think Mike will probably try to marry the girl the same day they graduate." Steve laughed at that.

"You have a very good point."

Kamchatka, Russia

"Not the American." One of two men spoke, in Russian. "Not today." he continued.

The other man nodded and skipped the door, opening the one right next to it, and together, they hauled a dirty, dark haired man out and dragged him out of the cell. He fought like hell to get away from them, but it didn't work, and he was dragged down long hallways and never ending stair wells…

Until he was thrown into a large cage, dried blood all over the floor, hardly a spot without it.

He turned as he heard rattling, metal squealing as he gave up on begging them. A door lifted as he held onto the sides of the cage for dear life, not knowing what his fate would be.

He heard snarling, and suddenly, a horrid, horrid creature came crawling out from behind the door, and the man's heart nearly stopped on sight. It stood, taller and taller until it was *impossibly* tall. He backed away as it stalked closer, and with a screech, the Demogorgon attacked.

2. Chapter Two

Last chapter's title was "A Rehash of Crazy Friends" named by the amazing Squashie (phieillydinyia), which, for those who think it was a recap, it really wasn't, lmao. Obviously, yes, we had El's reaction to Hopper being gone, with a little extra, and the Byers and El moving, which was *after* what happened in the actual show. Everything else is just what happened in the three months. I didn't want to start another story just for the three months ya know.

So names of the chapters are actually pretty long, so I'ma just put the title in the actual chapter cause i'm not renaming the shits I put a LOT of thought in them xD The longest title has nine (9) words in it!

Ao3 & FF- After this chapter, the story begins, with eight long, long chapters of craziness :D

And if you still think I hate Max by the end of this chapter, idk what to tell you 'cause I don't.

Luis Rodriguez played by Marcel Ruiz

Chapter Two: Happy Holidays and In Between!

Thursday, October 31, 1985

Hawkins, Indiana

"It's so weird not going trick-or-treating this year," Dustin said to Lucas as they greeted Mrs. Wheeler, going straight to the basement.

"I know. As tall as Mike's getting, they'd probably not give him any candy 'cause he looks too old."

"I can buy my own candy, thank you very much," Mike called, his face mushed in a pillow on the couch. "Screw them."

"Someone isn't a happy camper!" Dustin smacked Mike on the ass

with a pillow, so Mike grabbed the pillow his face was in, and smacked Dustin's legs so fast and surprisingly hard he hit the ground, arms flailing. "You ass!" Dustin shrieked, he and Lucas both falling into peels of laughter. Mike rolled his eyes and sat up, sitting Indian style on the couch. The two finally calmed down and sat in their respective spots.

"Where are you getting money, anyways?" Lucas asked.

"Helping mom out more. She slips me an extra five or ten every week. And when we're not hanging out I've been raking leaves for the neighbors."

"You haven't raked *our* leaves," Lucas said, raising an eyebrow.

"Yeah, because you can do it." Mike replied, giving him a look. "And everyone else in this neighborhood is old as hell and can't do it."

"Awe look, Mikey boy's heart is softening."

"Keep it up or no pizza for you, Dustybun." Mike mocked. Dustin flipped him off.

They didn't talk much as Mike got a movie set up on the TV and started it.

A quarter of the way through it, Mike couldn't even remember the name of it. He couldn't help noticing the empty space next to him, where Will would sit. He let out a sigh- louder than he meant- but the other teens didn't notice, too focused on the movie. They haven't been gone a week, and he misses them like crazy. He can just imagine what it would feel like in a month, a year… it sucked. He knows he'll still get to see his best friend and his girlfriend, but Mike has seen his best friend or talked to him at least once a day- besides that week in '83, of course- since they were five years old. They'd been friends for almost ten years now.

Nine years in a row, they went trick-or-treating together, eventually adding Lucas and Dustin into the group, and then Max last year. After last year, they planned on *not* going trick-or-treating, to instead watch movies at the Wheeler's, in Mike's basement. But Will isn't

there, he wouldn't be coming late. He wasn't even in the state anymore.

And El, well… the two got to see each other every single day for almost a year. Now, if they're lucky, they'll get to see each other twice a month. Sure, they've talked at least once a day for what feels like hours, thanks to Cerebro, as Joyce hadn't set up the phone yet. El has *never* experienced Halloween, not even with Hopper, and Mike thought they'd all give her the experience she deserves this year, but that thought was so completely wrong it made him feel like an idiot.

Elgin, Illinois

El sighed, resting her chin on her hand as she listened to some kid Halloween movie that was playing, but she wasn't paying attention. She thinks it was called E.T. Will told her that Dustin thought she was like their E.T., but she wasn't an alien, so she didn't really react to it when he told her.

She, Joyce, Will and Jonathan sat on the couch, squished together, but she didn't mind. She felt better, safer, feeling the warmth around her. It didn't stop her from missing Mike, though. They talked today, using cerebro, and he sounded so sad that she wasn't there. He always did, but today especially. She was sad too, but she couldn't do anything about it. No one could.

The only good thing about today was that the candy was *good*. And Joyce bought a bunch of it, and the teens damn near ate all of it by the time the night was over.

"Well," Will said as the two brushed their teeth together, "At least you'll have the annual November first stomach ache." El looked at him, stopping her brushing and made a face at him. He spit the toothpaste into the sink and wiped his mouth with a washcloth. "When you eat a lot of candy like we did tonight, you get a stomach ache, and the only time me or the Party actually ate so much candy was Halloween, so we just started calling it that."

"Oh." she smiled a little. "Annual is… every year, right?" Will nodded.

"Yeah. Sorry, I didn't know if you knew it or not." he apologized.

"It's okay." she spit in the sink and rinsed her mouth out and Will rinsed the sink out. "If I don't know something, I'll ask. Or look in the dictionary."

"Don't hesitate to ask." Will told her. She nodded and gave him a smile.

"Thank you. Goodnight, Will. Have a good day at school tomorrow."

"I'll try. Goodnight, El."

Friday, November 1, 1985

"Hello," a voice interrupted Will's thought and he flinched, looking up at the source of the voice, "can I sit with you?" the boy asked.

"Um…" Will has gone to this school for three whole days, and this is the first time *anyone*- other than the teachers- have spoken to him. "Sure." The boy sat on the other side of the table, emptying his lunch bags contents out in front of him without a second thought.

"How you doing?" he asked, taking a bite out of his sandwich.

"Uh, good?"

"Good, good. So, you're new."

"I am."

"You're not very talkative, are you?" Will just shrugged. "Do you want to be friends? I don't have any either."

"I have friends. Just… not here. But sure." Will smiled a little.

"Awesome! I don't have any friends because I'm a nerd and I talk too much sometimes. Do you like science?" he asked, excited. Will laughed.

"I'm a nerd too. I love science, my friends and I won the science fair a

few times."

"That's cool! I've never participated."

"Do they still do those in high school, though?" the boy shrugged.

"I don't know. But if they do, maybe we can do something together?"

"Yeah, definitely. Uh, what's your name?" Will asked.

"Oh! My apologies, my name is Luis Rodriguez. Nice to meet ya!" he held out a hand for Will to shake. He did, chuckling.

"Will Byers. It's nice to meet you too."

"Mom!" Will yelled as he walked in the house.

"In here!" she called. She and El were sitting at the kitchen table, working on El's school work.

"Guess what." he said, grinning, practically bouncing up and down. Joyce raised her eyebrows, surprised. She hadn't seen her son look this happy or excited since before July.

"What?" she asked, smiling at him.

"I made a new friend today."

"Really? That's awesome Sweetie! What's his name?"

"Luis Rodriguez. He said he's a Latino or something I think." he said, dropping his bag on the ground and sitting next to El. "I was just eating lunch and he walked up to the table and asked if he could sit with me and I was like *yeah* and he sat down and just dumped all of his stuff out of his lunch bag and started talking and talking. He asked if I wanted to be friends and looked happy when I told him I did. He said he didn't have any either."

"Wow, he seemed excited! You're a lovable person, I don't know how you don't have more friends."

"It's because I'm a nerd." he shrugged. "And besides, I don't want a *bunch* of friends. I'm fine with a small group. It's less of a betrayal if they hang out without you."

"You've watched too many soaps." Joyce chuckled. "Becoming a little dramatic, are we?"

"Don't blame the soaps, blame Mike."

"Mike watched soaps with me." El said, grinning. "He quotes them on Cerebro sometimes, and he told me he accidentally said one to his mom."

"Was it *but I love her mother*?" Will asked. She giggled and shrugged.

"He wouldn't tell me."

"I bet it was something like that." Will snickered.

"Mike is a bit dramatic, with repeating the same sentence in less than ten seconds." Joyce said.

"When him and Nancy come to visit, I'm totally gonna tease him." Will grinned.

Tuesday, November 26, 1985

Hawkins, Indiana

Today is the last day of school before Thanksgiving break, meaning it was a half day, and students are let out right before lunch, and Mike was a twitchy little shit, according to Dustin.

"All I've felt is your desk shaking next to mine. Would you quit it!" Dustin hissed. They weren't doing anything in class, just waiting for the bell to ring, and Mike's leg shaking was moving the desks around him. "You twitchy little shit." he muttered.

"Sorry." Mike mumbled. "I'm nervous and excited, okay? Me and Nance are leaving at twelve thirty."

"I know, I know, you and El are gonna make out the whole time you're there." Dustin rolled his eyes. "How about remember Will is there and he's your best friend, so don't ignore him over El."

"I wouldn't do that!" Mike retorted, narrowing his eyes at Dustin. Dustin raised his eyebrows and he poked Mike's shoulder.

"You did that all summer, over the rest of us. You can't tell me you wouldn't do that, Mike."

"I… I know, I'm sorry." Mike mumbled. "I'm not gonna ignore Will, I promise. I do, Dustin, I promise I won't."

"You better not, because you know damn well Lucas and I will be checking in now that they have a phone and you won't be able to hog it to talk to El." Dustin grinned at him now. Mike rolled his eyes at that and flipped his friend off, and Dustin laughed.

Not long after, the bell finally rang, and Mike damn near sprinted like a bat out of hell out the door, the first one out of the classroom and the door leading to the bike racks.

"Jesus Christ." Dustin muttered, running after him to catch up. Dustin was the last there, Lucas having been close behind Mike even though his class was closer to the door.

"Dude, slow down. You have thirty minutes or more before you leave. Just ride with us like normal man, we won't see each other until Monday back at this hell hole." Lucas huffed. Mike sighed and sat on his bike as he waited for them.

"I'm sorry, I'm excited okay. I miss them and I wanna see who this Louie kid is that Will is friends with."

"His name is Luis and you, Michael Ronald Wheeler, are jealous as all hell.' Dustin pointed at him.

"First off, that is *not* my middle name and you know it, and second, I am *not* jealous!"

Dustin and Lucas looked at each other and said in unison, "He's jealous."

"I'm not!" Mike crossed his arms, glaring at them.

"Mike, the more defensive you get, and look, the more you're making a fool of yourself. We're not idiots." Dustin said.

"It's because he's Latino, isn't it?" Lucas asked. "Because all Latino's are apparently hot, I wonder if he has a sister." Lucas rubbed his stubbly chin.

"As if you would date her if he did." Mike scoffed. Lucas shrugged.

"You never know."

"I do know. And I'm not jealous. I just don't want him to be screwing with Will and faking being his friend, you know?" Mike said as the three took off down the street, finally.

"Will can make friends, you know." Dustin said. "They don't always have to suck."

"I know he can and I'm glad he has a friend, but you know how people can be. People are all just giant assholes."

"Speak for yourself, Frogface." Troy shoved Mike off his bike as he and James rode past them, and Mike hit the asphalt with a huff, a loud bang, and a swear.

"Goddammit, see what I mean!" he exclaimed, kicking his bike away from him. Dustin and Lucas stopped quickly and got off their own bikes to help him up, and he brushed them off.

"How hard did you hit your face, dude?" Lucas asked. "Your cheek is bleeding." he poked the spot he was talking about and Mike hissed, smacking his hand away. Lucas wiped the little bit of blood he got on his finger in Mike's sweater. Mike stared at him for a second.

"Hard. I'm fine, let's go." he picked up his bike and they were off again, Mike not speaking as much as before. He and Lucas said goodbye to Dustin as they passed his house, and headed to their own.

"Are you okay, man?" Lucas asked, as they stopped in his driveway. Mike nodded.

"I will be. I'm not gonna let those assholes ruin this for me."

"Good." Lucas said, and held out a hand. They did their little handshake. "I'll see you on Monday. Don't forget that we're gonna call, and you gotta call us." Lucas gave him a pointed look and Mike chuckled, nodding.

"I will. See you Monday." Mike got off his bike and walked it the rest of the way, putting it in the garage and going in the house.

"Michael! I made you and Nancy lunch before you leave!" Karen called the second he walked in the door. He could have sworn her heard someone whisper "hey" as he walked into the kitchen, but shrugged it off. "Oh my- what happened to your cheek?" she asked immediately, rushing over with a wet rag.

"I'm fine, mom." he tried to fight her off but she kept at it, poking and wiping at the blood on his cheek.

"I don't think it needs stitches, just a bandaid." she opened a cabinet and grabbed a box of them, taking one out.

It's literally just a scrape, mom, jeez.

"What happened, Mike?" she asked.

"Troy shoved me off my bike." he replied, shrugging. "I'm fine, though. I don't really feel it."

That was a bold face lie. The scrape on his cheek stung like a bitch and the area around it ached, and he knew there would be a bruise in a few hours, but he was fine. He was going to see his girlfriend and best friend. "I'm not gonna let that asshole ruin today for me." Karen sighed, placing the bandage on his cheek.

"I wish you'd stop that in front of Holly."

"Sorry." he muttered.

"Hi Mikey!" Holly waved at him from her spot in front of the fridge, where she was playing around with some letter magnets. He waved back at her and gave her a smile.

"Where's Nancy?" Mike asked, sitting at the table where his mom put his food, Nancy's plate next to his.

"Making sure she's got everything." Karen told her son, who nodded. He'd already packed over the weekend, so he knew everything he needed was there. Things he wanted to take to Will and El alike, clothes, magazines, old books, games, etc.

He ate his food and watched Holly play with her magnets.

"Come look Mikey, I spelled your name!" she said happily, running over and looking up at him. She held a hand out to him and with a chuckle, he took it and let her drag him over to the fridge.

Well… she wasn't wrong. It was his name, but spelled like "Mykie".

An hour into the drive, Mike couldn't help but stare at his sister like she was insane. She was blasting "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" and dancing in her seat.

"What?" she asked, looking over at him, laughing at the look on his face.

"You're weird."

"As if you wouldn't be dancing to your favorite song like that." she rolled her eyes.

"No?" he shook his head.

"Sure. What do you want to listen to?" she asked. He shrugged.

"I don't care." he said.

"So if I play a Christmas tape you won't care?" she asked. He shook his head. "Okay then." she grinned and looked through her tapes while at a stop light, and started a mixed tape of Christmas songs Jonathan made for her.

That's how the rest of the ride went, Nancy dancing to her music and trying to get Mike to dance with her, but to no avail. They stopped

once to use the bathroom and get a few snacks, and were on the road again.

They arrived a few minutes after five o'clock, later than they should have, but Thanksgiving traffic is a *bitch.* The siblings were both giddy, just about shaking with anticipation as Mike directed them into the neighborhood where the Byers and El lived now. Three figures were sitting on the front porch of a two story house, huddled together with a thick comforter wrapped around them to shield them from the cold. As Nancy came to a stop, Jonathan, Will and El jumped up, rushing towards the car. The two siblings inside it looked at each other and nearly fell out of the car they got out so fast. Jonathan picked Nancy up and spun her around, both of them laughing, and Will hugged Mike so tight he could hardly breathe, and vice versa. El let them hug first, rocking on her heels for her turn with her boyfriend.

With a sniff, Will let Mike go and Mike immediately pulled El into a kiss, having to lean down more than usual to reach her. She put her hands on either side of his face and kissed back, giving Will and Nancy the best opportunity to gag. Mike pulled away, looking at them in his peripheral because El's hands were still on his face.

"Shut up." he said, turning back to El, who smiled at him. Her hair was a little longer, a little more tamed, and she still hadn't actually gotten taller and he loved it. Still as beautiful as ever.

As for Mike, El noticed, his hair was longer- *why doesn't my hair grow that fast?-* he was definitely taller than when she last saw him, but the main thing she noticed was the bandage on his cheek, slightly bruised and eye starting to bruise. She ran her thumb over the bandage.

"What happened?" she asked.

"I fell off my bike earlier." he told her. It wasn't a total lie. "Smacked my face on the road."

"Ouch." he chuckled at the response and hugged her. She hugged back, smiling into his jacket, smiling wider when he pulled Will into the hug.

"Jesus Christ, Mike! You've gotten taller!" Joyce exclaimed, walking out to join them, hugging Nancy first, and then Mike, once the pair let him go. "Oh Lord, what happened?" she asked, gently holding his cheek.

"He fell off his bike." Will quipped. "He can't walk straight with those long spider legs, let alone ride a bike." he grinned at Mike, who raised his eyebrows.

"William."

"Michael."

"I'm gonna beat your ass." Mike ducked under Joyce's arm and ran at Will, who shrieked and took off running around the house.

"Mike runs so weird." Nancy sighed.

"You've gotta admit, he is getting tall and lanky-er." Jonathan said. "He's taller than me!"

"He is *not*." Nancy rolled her eyes.

"You just refuse to believe he's taller than *you*."

"He puts his chin on top of my head daily, I couldn't refuse to believe it if I wanted to." Jonathan laughed and tickled her sides, and she let out a shriek similar to Will's and scrambled away from her boyfriend, and he chased her into his house.

Joyce and El looked at each other and laughed, linking arms and walking onto the porch, waiting for Mike and Will to come back around. When they did, Mike just about keeled over, bending over with his hands on his knees, breathing hard. He looked up at the two as Will laughed, squinting at them because of the sun.

"I'm not fit for this shit."

True to his word, Dustin called to make sure Mike wasn't just spending all his time with El and ignoring Will, whereas El confirmed, telling him about the chase the day he and Nancy arrived.

Over the next four days- they had to leave Sunday afternoon to get back to Hawkins- the Party called and had many chats together over the phone, fighting over who held it, but over all that alone was fun. Mike met the famous Luis the day after Thanksgiving, the boy bright eyed and jittery, reminding him a bit of Dustin.

Of course, at first, he was jealous of how much he made El laugh, but every time El came back over to him and hugged him, just for the hell of it. They hugged a lot those four days, as did Mike and Will.

By Sunday morning, Mike could pretty much call Luis a member of the Party, had he played DnD, but they were definitely friends. Mike did have a bit of an off feeling about him, he couldn't put his finger on it, but he seemed like a nice, genuine guy so he was happy Will had made a friend, and by extension, El a new friend.

There were a lot of tears and hugs before and after the Wheeler siblings left, promising to call over and over again. El and Will hardly let Mike go, and had it not been for Joyce, would have one hundred percent went back to Hawkins with them. The two didn't listen to a single song on their way home, both silent in their seats, tears falling and sniffles filling the real silence.

Thursday, December 19, 1985

Max sighed as she sat on the curb in front of the Wheeler's. Yes, the Wheeler's. She didn't have anywhere else to go- Lucas and Dustin were still pissed at her, even though she apologized to them countless times. She figured Mike would at least let her sit on his porch, under the circumstances. It seemed as though he was the only one that cared about the situation with Neil. At least, he did if that night at the hospital was worth anything.

Everything had been going… okay, all things considered. She had been grounded- by Neil- for who knows how long, blaming her for her step-brothers death. Her mom went along with it, but what else is new? She had to go to school and *straight* home, every single day, on her bike.

Once she was kicked out of the party, she started getting up

impossibly early to get to school before they did, as she'd rather not ride her bike near them.

She was late getting home today. For the first time, and Neil was waiting, her mom out buying groceries. She talked back to him, couldn't even remember what was said. All she could remember was the loud *SLAP* and the stinging pain on her left cheek. She ran out before he could say or do anything else. So, she went straight to the Wheeler's, where there were no cars in the driveway and no bike thrown in the front yard. Meaning no one was home, and it was snowing and freezing cold.

It's been nearly two months since the Byers and El moved, and she's only seen them once, when Jonathan brought the two out for a visit while they were on Thanksgiving break. Mike and Nancy drove to Elgin the day before Thanksgiving, and left the day after. El was being officially home schooled with the help of the three Byers, and a tutor from the school that Will had become quick friends with. The Party- and Max, since she wasn't apart of it *anymore*- had all hung out that weekend they came home. El and Will were about the only ones who talked to her, *really* talked to her, though the three stubborn boys said a few words to her. She tried, she really did, but *God* boys were such idiots. She can't help the way she acts- well she can, but she doesn't *know how*. All she really knows is Neil and Billy, and they definitely aren't good role models. Max thinks Billy could have been a good one, had it not been for his father.

From what El told them, Billy had an *amazing* relationship with his mother. When El told him the memory of he and his mother on the beach, that's what stopped him from killing her. It's what brought him back, and saved them all. But she left because of Neil, and Neil was *all* Billy knew. He didn't have a good father growing up, never had a good one, and according to the books she's read, a child who only knows abuse and anger, usually turns out the same.

She didn't want to be like that. She didn't want to be like Neil, *hell* she didn't want to be like her *mother*. She loved her mom, the only good thing in her life right now, but her mom was weak, too scared to stand up to her husband. Max knew she would never do it, even if she saw him slap her own daughter. She'd seen Neil hit his own son too many times, and just looked away.

But damn if she wasn't headed down the same path as Billy had. Maybe she wasn't out partying and doing shit she shouldn't do, maybe she wasn't being abusive, but she felt like she was out trying to ruin other people's lives and relationships, being mean to people, all because her life sucked, and she wanted to change it. That's what she was gonna tell Mike, she was gonna explain herself, and he was gonna give *her* an explanation, and El one too, when they come home for Christmas. She only hoped that he'd listen, because he had the great ability not to.

She sighed, gently rubbing the side of her face with a freezing hand. She wondered if it was still red, or if it had already begun bruising. He'd hit her so hard, she wondered what it was she said to him. She got lost in her head again for a while, only coming out of it when she heard a hoarse yell and the sound of metal clattering on the asphalt. She jumped up and saw Mike down the street, laying in the middle of it, his bike half on top of him. No one was with him, as they'd already dispersed, Lucas going in his house before Mike had left this driveway. Max left her bag where it was and took off towards him, almost wanting to laugh as he swore to himself, kicking the bike away from him.

"Mike, are you okay?" she asked, reaching him. He looked up at her and laid flat on his back.

"Did I hit my head?" he groaned. "I could have sworn you were nowhere near me." she rolled her eyes and held her hands out to him. With a huff, he let her pull him up.

"Do you *ever* eat? You're so skinny. The wind is gonna blow you away one day." he glared at her, shaking his hair out of his face.

"Yes, I eat. I could eat a whole large pizza if my mom would let me."

"She needs to let you, then."

"Tell her that." he said, picking his bike up, glaring at the godforsaken thing.

"So, uh, what happened?"

"A tire blew." he replied. "This is the third time in two months. I'm gonna have to walk to school now."

"Maybe you *are* too heavy for it, then." he huffed and rolled his eyes. "Uh, you can ride with me, if you want." she offered, cringing at herself. He raised an eyebrow at her.

"Uh, maybe. If my parents don't get it fixed." she nodded, biting her lip. "Why were you around here, anyways? Aren't you supposed to go home?" So he *did* pay attention.

"Yeah, I was kinda sitting on the curb in front of your house. Waiting for you to get home."

"Who's the stalker now." he muttered. "Why?"

"Um." she hesitated and pointed at her cheek. He stared at her for a solid minute.

"Are you *serious*?" he demanded, voice low and dark, startling her slightly. "He *hit* you?"

"I got home a few minutes late because I couldn't find the key to my lock on my bike, so I had to pick it. I talked back to him, he slapped me." she rubbed her cheek again, looking away from him. "I came here because I hoped you'd at least let me sit in front of your house rather than make me go home. Lucas and Dustin sure wouldn't, they wouldn't hear me out for shit."

"They have a good reason not to, Max." he replied. "And you're insane. I know I'm an asshole but damn, I'm not that cruel. I let a mysterious girl live with me for a week when I was twelve, why wouldn't I let you come in?"

"So you're saying your friends are kinda cruel?" she asked.

"No." he hissed. "Just stubborn as the devil."

"And because of how I've acted." she replied to his question then, shrugging.

"Yeah, well, I didn't exactly act right for a while either. Come on." she

nodded and followed him, grabbing her things and putting them in the garage with his, and followed him into the house.

"Dustin didn't really say much to me, but the day I got kicked out, Lucas said some not so nice things to me too." she said as Mike dug through his fridge, tossing a small bag of peas to her.

"Like what?" he asked.

"He called me controlling. He said that I hurt him over and over when I'd break up with him, because of little things, and that I was absolute shit to you, and that I never thanked you." she sighed as she placed the peas on her cheek. Mike opened his mouth to say something, but she beat him to it, "and he's right. I guess I can be controlling, and I know that I hurt him, and I want to change that. If he'd listen to me, I could explain myself. And I did treat you like shit, and I'm sorry. I should have thanked you for standing up for me like you did. So, thank you for standing up for me like you did." he chuckled a little at the repeated phrase, and shrugged. "Stop laughing and shrugging at me, Wheeler, this is hard for me to do." she said, half serious, half joking. He rolled his eyes.

"I don't know what you want me to say, Max. Yeah, you treated me like shit, and turned El against me. Pretty much made her break up with me. I know I lied to her, and I apologized for it." he scratched the back of his neck. "Thanks, I guess? For apologizing and… you're welcome for *attempting* to stand up for you."

"*Why* did you lie to her?" Max asked. He bit his lip, sighing.

"Hopper told us something happened with Nana." he started. "And by the time he dropped me off, he forced me to go along with the lie. He threatened me. I don't know what I did wrong, Max, because he was totally fine with me being over there for the first few months. Hell, El even took a picture of me and him, and he *actually* smiled! But he just snapped, and started watching us like a hawk like we were gonna do anything but kiss." he rolled his eyes at that. "And I know that *I* was a giant, sarcastic asshole to him the last month or two, so I guess that's what I did wrong. Anyways, that's not the point. On the way home, he pretty much told me that if I kept coming over every single day, he wouldn't let us see each other ever again. And the man is-

was- terrifying. I felt like an ant next to him." she snorted at that. "So, the next day, when El called me, I told her that Nana was sick and I couldn't come over. I'm sure she told you all of what I said on the phone." Max nodded.

"But at the mall, you should have told her the truth."

"Don't talk to me about truth, Max." he said, but it was harsh. She nodded her head as if saying "good point." "But I shouldn't have continued the lie, I know. We were at the mall so I could *buy* her something and apologize for it, and there was this gold teddy bear at a jewelry store and it was *three hundred dollars*."

"That's ridiculous!" she exclaimed. He nodded in agreement.

"And it wasn't even that big! Honestly, I don't know what it was for, because it was too big to go on a necklace, but I figured she'd like it. And I only had three dollars and-"

"Fifty cents, yes, I was there." he glared at her and she grinned. "But I lied, and I apologized. No, I haven't told her the *exact* reason why, and that's because she folds in on herself anytime Hopper is mentioned, and won't talk for hours." His expression and tone of voice turned darker as he continued, "Boyfriends don't always lie. Girlfriends don't always lie. Friends don't lie was made because when we were kids, the only thing we had to lie about was accidentally stealing a pencil from someone else." Max couldn't help but snort at that, and he rolled his eyes. "Sometimes we have to lie to protect the ones we love. I think El understands that now. So let's get off the topic of lying, and onto the topic of controlling and manipulating."

"I was waiting for that."

"I'm sorry, Max, but you need to know that what you did with El wasn't okay. You manipulated her into thinking it was okay to spy on us, that boyfriends always lie, that it's okay to break the rules and make your own rules. Depending on what it is, making your own rules is fine, I don't care, but she wasn't supposed to be in public yet and that alone was a big no no for Hopper, and all I cared about- other than the *obvious*- was her being safe and without the government on our backs, looking for her. And by taking her to the

mall, you risked her freedom, and maybe even her life."

Mike stopped his rant when he heard her sniffle, looking at her. He'd seen Max cry twice, maybe three times in the year he's known her, and for some one as strong as her to cry, hurt his heart a little.

"I'm sorry, I didn't want to make you cry-"

"Well you did!" she huffed, wiping at her eyes. "And you're right. You're right about it all, and if you were gonna say anything about me and Lucas'- now nonexistent- relationship, you're right. I could have ruined El and in extension, everyone's lives by taking her out. But I hated that she was stuck in that cabin by herself most days, when you'd already left and Hopper was at work. And I know we didn't actually become friends until July, but I love El like she's my sister, okay, and she came to me for advice about you, and I didn't know any better. I thought that what I was telling her was a normal thing, because it's all I've ever known. My mom has *never* talked to me about anything like this, when it comes to boys. Most of what I know comes from stupid magazines and my own real life experiences. Men lie and do stupid things to hurt women. And good God that bullshit with Nancy and Jonathan at The Hawkins Post? Jonathan was doing the good stuff, and all Nancy was needed for was food, when she was a much better reporter than all those dickheaded men in there." Mike chuckled at the end, and nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, she'd come home pissed off a lot, talking about how men sucked. And they do, I agree. But I don't want to be like that, I want everyone to be equal, you know? Men and women can do the same damn thing, and women even better most of the time."

"That was the smartest thing I've ever heard you say."

"And I know that's all you know. I can tell, you didn't have to tell me that. I'm sorry but your family is actual shit." she nodded. "Do what I'm *trying* to do, and learn from your parents' mistakes. Watch and learn, take in what they do to their husband or wife, or friends, and do the exact damn opposite."

"I want to, but it's hard. I don't want to be weak like my mom, and I don't want to be a whole ass dick like Neil, but I'm both. Maybe not

as bad as Neil, but I'm turning out like him. Manipulating and horrible."

"Hold on." Mike held up a hand. "First off, you're *not* weak. You're a badass. And you're not even close to being like Neil. You don't just toss people around, hitting them and saying horrible things to them."

"I've said some horrible things in my life, Mike."

"Okay, and? So have I. No one's perfect, certainly not in this shitty little town." he went to the freezer and opened it again, digging around until he came out with a large frozen pizza. "I don't know how or why I've been given a second chance and forgiven for how I acted last year, but if I deserve a second chance, then so do you. How about I put this in the oven, we go to the basement and set up the TV with Ghostbusters and bribe Dustin and Lucas to come over so we can all talk?"

"Bribe them with pizza or Ghostbusters?" she asked.

"Both," he replied, turning the oven on and digging a pan out of a cabinet. "There's drinks in the fridge if you want something." he told her, and made his way down to the basement to call Dustin and Lucas.

Twenty minutes later, the two friends just waltzed right into the Wheeler's house, Dustin yelling, "Who's the code mustard?"

"Did you really just call it code mustard?" Lucas asked, making a face. Dustin nodded.

"Yes. Mustard is yellow. Code yellow is mustard."

"Okay. Mike?" Lucas called.

"Basement!" Mike yelled.

"I smell the pizza." Dustin grinned and ran towards the basement door. Lucas rolled his eyes and followed. "What the hell?" Dustin asked, stopping at the bottom and looking at Max. Lucas stopped behind him and did the same thing.

"Nope." he turned around and started back up the stairs but Mike reached out and grabbed his arm, pulling him back down. "Where the *hell* did you just come from?"

"Beside the stairs." Mike replied. "You two, sit. And be nice."

With matching groans, the two sat on the couch. Max was sitting in an armchair, hands in her lap and staring at the blank TV.

"You're code mustard?" Dustin asked after a few seconds. Mike plopped down on the couch between he and Lucas and rolled his eyes.

"You called it code *mustard*?" Max asked Mike, who shook his head.

"Dustin's just an idiot. Ignore him. Code yellow is pretty much a step down from code red. Someone's gotten hurt."

"Oh."

"You're hurt?" Lucas asked. She shrugged at that.

"Do you want me to tell them or do you?" Mike asked her. Max shrugged again. He sighed and glanced at his two friends. "Max was late getting home from school. Words were said, and Neil slapped her."

"WHAT?" Lucas shrieked and Max flinched. "I swear to God I'm gonna beat the shit out of that no good, crackhead looking ass bitch with my bare hands-"

"He doesn't look like a crackhead though?" Dustin said.

"Just let him be." Mike said, shaking his head.

"You can not and will not go back in that house, I won't let you. I'll chain you in Mike's basement before I let you go back around that abusive asshole."

"Kinky." Max muttered. "Sorry."

"When my mom gets home, I'll try and explain what happened and

see if we can figure something out."

Sorry Thanksgiving ended so quickly, I wanted to hurry up and get the chapter out because I'm very excited to start the next one! There's gonna be lots of flashback type of scenes, fast forwards, shit like that, the timeline is gonna be very weird compared to my usual stuff, but it needs to be done. You'll see what I mean. Different POV's as well.

I was going to write Christmas too, but because it's taken me so long just to get this out, I'm gonna skip over it, but here's a few lil details

The Byers and El come back to Hawkins and stay at Steve's house because, of course, his parents won't be home.

The Party is officially reunited, all six together and friends after what happened with Max and all.

Mike finished a campaign and it took like three days to finish it

El makes her first Gingerbread house and it's better than everyone except Will's, it's pretty equal for the two

Mileven kiss under every single mistletoe they can find- it's a LOT

They all just spend a lot of time together and the Byers and El spent half the day with the Wheeler's on Christmas day, the other half just the Party watching Christmas movies, eating sweets and drinking hot chocolate in Mike's basement

All around it's a good time and is very emotional when it's time to go back to Elgin

3. Chapter Three

Make sure y'all read the lil A/N at the end! Only reason it's not up here is because it contains spoilers for the chapter!

Also these are not going to be as long as I planned, but I hope you guys still like it!

We have a few little snippets from Christmas in this chapter, actually, one where Hopper finds out a secret.

Chapter Three: Faith is the Only Way to Survive

Thursday, July 4, 1985

The Upside Down

He was cold. That's the first thing he noticed. He was cold, and he was shivering.

The second thing he noticed was the noises. The chattering of his teeth. The wail of winds, the screeches of monsters, something that almost sounded like a wolf howl.

The third thing he noticed, when he finally opened his eyes, was that he was not underneath the Star Court Mall anymore. He was on the edge of the woods by the middle school. He didn't know how he got here from where the gate under the mall was, but he wasn't gonna complain.

The last thing he noticed, was the fact that he was in the Upside Down. Alone. The gate was closed, and he was trapped with no way out.

Hopper bit back a groan as he sat up, looking around. Looking at the middle school gym, all he saw was a sad, run down version of itself. One of the doors was hanging off its hinges, vines took up most of it, weaving in and around the walls of the building.

"What in the *hell*… was I thinking?"

In the distance, he heard a loud screech and scrambled up. He darted towards the gym doors, barely stopping to look and see if there was anything inside, and pulled the hanging door closed as much as he could.

Taking heaving breaths, Hopper turned around, his back to the door, only to find a somewhat normal gym. He expected the inside to be just as viney and disgusting as the outside, but he was wrong. It was dusty, as if it had only been abandoned rather than in a completely different dimension. Not much light shown through the broken windows, but what did definitely helped.

Had the Upside Down not been perpetually stuck in darkness, it'd be a lot easier to see inside. Those blue mats that kids had to use to do push ups or sit ups were stacked on top of each other in a corner, other gym equipment scattered around the floor and in the bleachers.

"You weren't thinking, dumbass." he muttered to himself. "It was either this or death. Everyone probably thinks you're dead anyways."

He slid against the wall until he hit the floor.

El will think he's dead. That was the last thing she needed. She had nowhere to go, the cabin destroyed… she definitely wasn't going to that Wheeler boy's house, he knew Karen and Ted wouldn't allow that. The only reasonable person would be Joyce…

Joyce. Joyce Byers, Joy, *his* Joy. She asked him out on a date. A *real* date, and he fucked it up by jumping in here, where he'd probably die anyways. That's where El would probably go. But… Joyce was moving. He didn't know where, he just knew she was moving soon, and he couldn't stop her. That would mean El would probably go with her. She'd have to, there'd be no other way.

"You *idiot*." he smacked himself in the forehead a few times and buried his face in his hands, letting out a muffled, angry scream. "God*dammit* Jim. What have you done?"

A week later, Hopper had yet to come in contact with any monsters. It was like they were here, but weren't. He could hear them, but couldn't see them. So, he went exploring. He'd found a box of

matches in the storage room of the gym, and had been able to make a fire. He had no idea how it worked here, as cold and damp as it is, but it did. It worked.

But he needed clothes, water and food. He'd explored around the school until he found the cafeteria, and food that was in the fridge and freezers were somehow not rotted or moldy, but stranger things have happened. It would last him a couple weeks at most, as it was enough for a hundred kids a day for a week, probably, but schools don't give kids much at lunch, and he had to eat a lot if he wanted to fill himself up any. So he had to find more if he wanted to survive.

He found some more clothes in a few houses near the school, along with food and other things in freezers and fridges. The only thing good from fridges, though, were water bottles and drinks- besides milk, at least. He'd found some canned food and took it with him back to the gym with every trip.

Anything hung up on a hanger was pretty decent, but anything on the floor or folded up in drawers was dirty and covered in vines. It didn't stop him from taking a pocket knife he found and cutting the vines and taking socks and underwear, deciding to wash them himself once he found a good water supply.

That water supply was at the pond where his old trailer sat. It didn't really have anything left in it in the real world, so he didn't bother going inside it. The water was definitely nowhere near being freshwater, so he filled up water bottles upon water bottles with it and took it back to the gym. He used a pot to boil the water until it was good enough to drink. It took a while, but it worked, and he made a decent supply of it, every other day going to the pond and back and adding to it so he didn't run out.

Monday, October 14, 1985

Kamchatka, Russia

He smiled as he heard his door begin to unlock, and he stood, leaning against the back wall. He put his hands up as he spoke Russian to them, the second the door opened.

"Friends, I know you have a creature." he stated calmly. "I recognize the shrieks."

"We are not your friends, Martin Brenner." the leader said. "You are to be fed to the creature, whether you tell the truth or lie."

Two other guards grabbed Brenner by the arms and hauled him out of the cell.

"I know how to get more for you. I know where the creature's are located."

"Why should I believe you?" the leader asked.

"Because… my daughter created them. Created the world with them in it. She can and she will make more if I ask her to."
"What is your daughter's name?"

"El. Short for Eleven."

Three days later, on October seventeenth, Brenner sat at the head of a table with Russian guards all around him, four men at the table with him, dressed in a suit and tie, a glass of wine and a well prepared meal in front of him.

"Your daughter, how does she create the world?" Bogdan asked.

"She has what is called Telekinesis. She can move things with her mind, can open portals into other worlds, visit a space in her mind."

"You lie!" a man at the end smacked his fists against the table.

"Oh shut it, Cheslav." another man, Karp, grumbled.

"Let the man talk." another said.

"Thank you, Fabiyan." Brenner nodded towards him. "What I speak is true. And my daughter can control them, I've seen her do it myself. It's been a very long time since I've seen her, though. I miss her."

"A father will always love his daughter. " Bodgan said, holding his glass up. The rest of the men followed suit and they clinked glasses.

"We will help you find your daughter. If you help us open a portal into the other world."

"Of course." Brenner smiled. "Anything you want, I'll help you with."

They began to come up with a plan, Brenner telling them that the creature could only open a portal to it's home if it was well fed, and strong. That wasn't the case, he didn't know if that would work or not, but he had faith in the creature, and faith that he'd see his beloved daughter again.

Tuesday, November 26, 1985

The Upside Down

That's how it went for the next four months, give or take a few days. He'd go house to house to find food, and would come back with a few days amount. He'd lost weight in those four months, but gained some of it back in muscle. He worked out to keep his mind off things, and he was in a gym, after all. He fixed all the windows, and the doors, making sure it was harder for monsters to get inside of. He knew that if they wanted to get inside, they would.

He'd definitely seen monsters prowling about in the four months he was in the Upside Down. Baby Demogorgons, others he'd never seen. What looked like small versions of what El and the kids fought inside the mall. El had described to him what it looked like, before the battle really began. There was one that really had his nerves on fire. A spider, with hundreds of teeth, eyes that can see every movement, jaws that can snap a deer right in half.

Yep, there were deer in the upside down. There were other animals, too. Rabbits, bugs, foxes, turtles, frogs, etc. All were deformed, though, he guessed from the air. They were a good food source, though, the rabbits and deer. He'd managed to get a deer one day. It was injured and couldn't walk. He felt bad, but put it out of its misery and was able to eat off it for a week and a half. He usually stuck to rabbits and ducks when they got stuck in the vines, which happened fairly often.

Nothing had actually bothered him. It's like they didn't know he was there, but they had to have. They more or less just passed through during the night (which was very hard to figure out the day and night cycle, but he got it) and during the day, nothing was around but the animals. They all went the same way, none ever coming back. It's like the were grouping up in a certain area, and the more he thought about it, the more he figured out. They were gathering at or near the lab. But was he gonna go and investigate why? Nope.

Hopper thought he felt alone, all those months before El, but now? He really was. He missed her. He missed Joyce. Hell, he even missed Wheeler and his little gang of friends. He doesn't really talk, he doesn't have a reason to, unless he's swearing at something he dropped or knocked over.

There were days where he just laid around, thinking about what El was doing. He's sure she's with Joyce, and he's sure they've been out of Hawkins for a while, because the house here was empty, so that one had to be empty too.

It wasn't until two days before Thanksgiving that he heard another voice for the first time. He'd gone all the way out to the Wheeler's house, and was searching through the garage when he heard a faint bang and then,

"Michael! I made you and Nancy lunch before you leave!"

Karen's voice. It was very faint, he could barely make it out, but... Maybe if he yells loud enough, someone would hear him.

"Hey!" he yelled. Nothing. They couldn't hear him. He walked inside the house, empty other than vines and things everywhere. He could faintly hear them, but they couldn't hear him. He heard their whole conversation and grumbled to himself about the Troy kid. He didn't like him a bit. Hopper stayed there overnight, listening to them. He heard Karen and Holly tell the older siblings goodbye, and when the three remaining Wheeler's headed to bed, Hopper made his way over to the fridge, to the magnets.

He'd never heard anyone on the other side before… why now?

All of a sudden, he had a thought. If Will could communicate with the lights… maybe Hopper could communicate with something. Lights wouldn't work, the Wheeler's didn't know anything about it, so they'd just think the power was acting up. So, he did the next best thing.

He moved the magnets.

And on the other side of "Upside Down" Hawkins, a portal began to open.

Wednesday, November 27, 1985

Hawkins

"Mommy! Someone said hi to me!" Holly said excitedly.

"They did? Where?"

"On the fridge! They said *Hi Holly* with my magnets."

"That's weird, I wonder who it was?" she asked. Karen nor Ted messed with the magnets, and Mike and Nancy had been gone a day already. "It was probably Mike, before he and your sister left."

"No, they weren't like that yesterday." she replied, crossing her arms. "It was someone else."

"Who could it have been, Holly?" Karen asked. Holly shrugged.

"I don't know. But it wasn't Mikey."

She left her mom standing there to go play in the living room, and Karen sighed. It was probably just an imaginary friend.

Hopper sighed. His little trick worked, but also didn't. Maybe when Mike got back home he'd try again.

And he did, but it seemed the kid was either blind, or the trick didn't work a second, fourth, or tenth time. He tried everyday, though. He

ventured out to get more food or water, and to hunt, and went to the Wheeler's house and tried to get Mike's attention. Nothing ever happened, so he just listened and listened.

He didn't know about the small portals being opened, or the men coming inside and going through another portal into Hawkins lab. No monsters made it known that they knew it opened. He didn't know it opened and that there was a way out until February twelfth, nineteen eighty-six, in the middle of the night, but that's still a ways away.

Feeding the creature worked wonders, and a little over a month later, Brenner was back in Hawkins lab. It was horribly run down, no power, but he was there. He was closer to Eleven.

"Don't worry about power." Fabiyan told him. "We will figure it out. Let's plan."

The creature was to stay in it's home for now, to breed, as Brenner said. The more creatures the better, especially the young.

"We only ever captured one, and it's dead, I believe. It was trying to kill my daughter's friends, and she protected them."

"It attacked you, too, didn't it?" Bogdan asked.

"It did, yes. An accident." Brenner reached up and ran his fingers over the rough scars on his face. "Blood attracts it, and I was bleeding. It was instinct."

"So if I bleed right now, it will come for me?" Cheslav asked.

"Probably." Brenner replied. "Her nose bleeds when she uses her powers, so if she's not careful it could hurt her too." he says as if she has complete control over them. Nothing controls them.

Well, one thing does. But he doesn't know that.

Friday, January 10, 1986

The Wheeler's/The Upside Down

Hopper heard about everything that happened with Max and her step-dad, and it made his blood boil. If he could, he'd get that kid away from all that bull shit and take her in as if she were his own. And he made a promise to get out of this place, one way or another, to help her.

Hopper never really believed in faith, after his daughter. Then El came along. And now, he wasn't gonna lose faith that he'd see her again. He would make sure of it.

Joyce, El, Will and Jonathan came back to Hawkins for Christmas and New Years. It hurt, a lot, hearing them, but not being there and seeing them. He heard El's contagious laughter, he grew angry when he heard Sinclair and Henderson making kissy sounds at his daughter and her boyfriend every time they were under the mistletoe at the Wheeler's house, which happened quite often.

But he was happy that they were happy. He'd never heard her laugh so hard. He spent his time listening, humming to himself Christmas songs he heard them playing, though it was faint.

"Do you hear that?" Mike asked one time, when it was just he and El in his room during Christmas break. Even in the Upside Down, Hopper could tell the door was open three inches.

"What?" El asked.

"Sounds like someone humming."

Hoppers eyes widened.

"Wheeler, can you hear me?"

"Someone just said something!"

"I didn't hear anything." El said, confusion in her voice.

"I swear I just heard something."

"Well who did it sound like?"

"It was… a deep voice. I don't know what they said."

"It was probably your dad talking in his sleep again." she said. "He is right below us in his chair."

Mike sighed. "You're right, I guess. I swear I hear a man's voice sometimes."

Maybe they could hear him, but it was faint? He'd yell until he couldn't anymore, but no one made any indication that they understood him, or knew it was him.

"You know, Holly's magnets have been moving around on their own."

A spark of hope flashed through Hopper.

"I think my house is haunted."

Goddammit, Wheeler.

El laughed at her boyfriend and shook her head. "Are we in A Christmas Carol now?"

"We might be!" Mike said. "It wouldn't be the craziest thing that's happened."

"True." El chuckled.

They talked for a few more minutes, voices slowly growing quieter until Hopper couldn't hear them. They'd fallen asleep.

Deciding to roam around some, Hopper left the room and walked down the hall. He paused at Nancy's room, where he heard their hushed whispers through the door. There were some areas louder than the other.

"What are we supposed to do, Jonathan?" Nancy asked.

"I-I don't know, Nancy."

"Do we keep it? Put it up for adoption? I can't kill it, I just can't."

Hopper's eyes widened. Nancy was pregnant.

"I mean… I kinda want to. Keep it, I mean."

"I do too, I think… My parents are gonna kill me." she let out a frustrated groan.

The Wheeler's would definitely be pissed, because it ruined their perfect look, but the one they've gotta worry about is Michael Wheeler. He may not have the best relationship with his sister, but he's protective of both of them, and Hopper has a feeling that it won't end well for anyone when he finds out.

"Someone's gonna get punched." he muttered, walking down the hall and to the stairs.

He decided to go to Harrington's house, where Joyce and the kids were staying while in Hawkins, and see what they were up to.

Tuesday, January 28, 1986

Melvald's

"We've been working here how long now?" Robin huffed, crossing her arms at her best friend. Steve stared at her for a few seconds, box in his arms.

"Like three months."

"Exactly, you should know where most of the stuff goes, dipshit. All that goes on aisle 7." she told him, pointing.

"Ah, I knew that." he turned and made his way to the aisle.

"Jesus." she sighed, shaking her head. He was such an idiot, but she loved him. She heard the bell go and turned around, putting a smile on her face, only to find the one and only Erica Sinclair and Dustin Henderson grinning at her. "Oh God, what do you two want?"

"I'm here to get stamps and find something for my girlfriend for Valentine's day." Dustin said.

"Uh huh, and why are you here, Missy?" she turned to Erica, who smirked.

"To make sure this idiot doesn't spend all our candy money on his girlfriend." she replied.

"Good decision."

"Where's Steve?" Dustin asked.

"Henderson! Get your ass back here and help me!" Steve yelled.

"Are you gonna pay me?" Dustin asked, following Steve's voice.

"Duh."

"That doesn't mean you still get to use all our candy money, Doofus!" Erica called to him.

"Yeah, yeah!" he yelled back. She rolled her eyes at him and turned, hopping up on the counter next to where Robin was standing.

"You know you're not supposed to do that."

"Mhm." she replied, grabbing a magazine and beginning to look through it. Robin chuckled and turned around to stock up on cigarettes behind the register.

Dustin and Erica were both good helpers, albeit annoying at times, but they somehow convinced customers to buy things they didn't need, racking up more money for the store than Steve and Robin had. They got their share of money, though. Neither were old enough to work, but Mr. Melvald added a little extra to Robin and Steve's checks to give to the two, promising them both a job when they were old enough. Dustin had a year and a half, since he didn't turn fifteen until September, and you had to be sixteen or older to work. Erica had five years, having celebrated her eleventh birthday in December.

"Ugh, this job is exhausting." Erica said as Steve and Robin began to close the store.

"You don't do half of what we do, Erica." Dustin said.

"Neither do you, shithead." Steve smacked him on the back of the head. Dustin just shushed him. "I'm assuming all three of you need a

ride home?"

"Duh." Erica said, as Dustin said,

"When don't we?"

"Good point, but that doesn't mean you can be sarcastic little assholes all the time." Steve huffed, grabbing his keys. Robin just laughed and followed them out the door, locking it up behind her.

In the Upside Down, Hopper shook his head. It was one of his favorite things to do during the day, listen in on the four acting like idiots, though he did hear many meaningful conversations, some he shouldn't have heard. He voiced his opinions, even though they couldn't hear him.

The Robin kid had thought someone came in the store one day, when Hopper said something particularly loud, but went back to the conversation as if nothing happened.

Tuesday, February 11, 1986

The lab now was up and running again one hundred percent, and ready to have the new Demogorgon's reopen the gate. Though, everything was taking place down in the basement, since if the lab itself was up and running again, it would immediately cause suspicion to the small town and it's little superheroes.

Starting off, they had small glass containers that held many slugs, tiny, gross sounds coming from them as they grew and grew over the last few weeks, now too big and too mean to stay together. They had to put them in their own cages, fully grown now and just itching to get out.

"I thought it was your daughter who could create them." Cheslav said to Brenner that day. Brenner crossed his arms.

"I believed she was the only one who could, but they breed like other animals, albeit much faster, it seems. She created the world and the species, and any other creature inside it, she can control it all once we find her. Any luck?" he turned to Karp, who shook his head.

"We've looked all over town for your daughter. We found some friends in a store, and heard them talking about where she used to live, with a man named Hopper, who died last July. We found the place, and found a picture of her and that boy." Karp took the picture out of his pocket and gave it to Brenner,

"Ah yes, Michael Wheeler." Brenner smirked. "I'm sure he knows where she is."

Wednesday, February 12, 1986

The Upside Down, late at night

Hopper was minding his own business, sitting outside the Wheeler's house and drawing in the squishy mud with a stick, when he heard distant yelling and bushes rustling. He looked around as if it would have been in the Upside Down, but shook his head at himself.

He listened closer, realizing the yelling was coming from Mike, who almost sounded like he was fighting for his life.

"Let me go! Let me go you piece of shit!"

"Mike?" Hopper yelled. His voice started moving away and Hopper scrambled up and followed it.

"Let me go! I'm not telling you where she is!" They were looking for El. Why were Russians looking for her now?

"Mike!" Hopper screamed.

"Hopper?" Mike sounded so confused.

"He's dead, you insufferable child. You're coming with us."

"No! Let me go! Help! Let me-!" Mike's voice suddenly cut off.

"Mike? Mike!" Hopper screamed.

"We've got to go." a man said. "Get to the lab before whoever is yelling finds us."

The lab. The fucking lab. He hadn't gone anywhere near it in his time in the Upside Down, but that's about to change. He didn't have any real weapons, only a knife he made himself and matches, which he guessed he could throw at something, but it wouldn't do much good. Just piss them off.

But Hopper made his way towards the lab, a long walk from the Wheeler's. He ran most of the way, determined to find out what exactly was going wrong.

Upon his arrival, he didn't see any sign of monsters, no footprints, goo, nothing. They must not have been joining at the actual lab. It was easy to get inside the lab in the Upside Down, so he didn't waste time going inside. Just as he was about to open the door, he heard a screech and looked back. All he saw was a black swirl of smoke going straight up into the sky, more following not long after.

"Fuck." he wrenched the door open and ran inside.

Taking a deep breath, he leaned against the wall and quieted down, listening for any noise, but there was nothing.

"Think, Hopper, if you were trying to be secretive inside this lab, would you work in the actual building? No, it causes suspicion." he muttered to himself. "I'd go underground."

The basement of the lab wasn't really your average basement, obviously. Your average basement was Wheeler's basement, and that one didn't have five more floors underneath it like the lab did.

As he walked down the stairs, Hopper listened carefully for any noise, any voices but heard none. At least, he didn't hear anything until the bottom floor, where the gate was located. It was just as huge as it was before, pulsing, bright. Alive. That's where he heard voices, growls and screeches from the other side.

"What the hell is going on?"

How we feeling?

I'm sure none of this shit could happen in the real Upside Down

on the show, but this is fanfiction so anything could happen! I'm treating this as an apocalypse world type of thing, with food, water, clothes, etc. You know what I mean. Hopper's gonna be here a while, so he's got to adapt and find a way to live.

Next chapter takes place in the real world, and we see some of the moments above in full :D

P.S. Yes I'm aware Brenner isn't El's bio dad, he's not in this story, he's just a creep lmao

4. Chapter Four

In this chapter, we have a few of the more important bits throughout the beginning of the new year, and some back story on our friend Luis!

Also, I meant to mention it in the last chapter, but Mike did talk to his mom about Max but Karen wouldn't be able to do anything about it. It would have been figured out instantly had Hopper been there.

Props to whoever gets the "Supernatural" quote ;D

What do you guys think El's dream is all about?

After this chapter we are finally, one hundred percent, getting on with the story, no flashbacks, nothing. We start off where we stopped and go from there, this story spanning over only a few days. I hope you guys enjoy!

Also, feel free to review! It'd be greatly appreciated!

Seriously, pls lmk what you think I'd probably update faster cause I'm very negative towards my writing lmfao. Knowing y'all are enjoying it makes me wanna get shit out faster, ya know?

Chapter Four: The Case of the Moving Magnets

Thursday, December 26, 1985

Hawkins, Indiana

"Jon." Nancy whispered, nudging at her boyfriend. He turned his gaze away from Steve and Dustin fighting to his girlfriend, who had a crease in her brow.

"What is it?" he asked quietly.

"Come with me." she stood carefully and went up to her room. No one was paying them any attention so he got up and followed her.

She was sitting on her bed when he arrived, and she just pointed at the door, signaling for him to shut it.

"Nance-?"

"I'm pregnant." she blurted, covering her mouth immediately after. He stared at her for a few seconds.

"You're… pregnant." he repeated.

"Yeah. I took a test last night."

"So… that's why you were acting weird today."

"Yeah." she paused for a moment. "I already made a doctors appointment, for tomorrow. It's like thirty minutes out of Hawkins. Will you go with me?" she asked.

"Oh- Of course! Of course, Nancy," he gave her a smile. "No matter what happens, it'll be alright, okay?"

Friday, December 27, 1985

"Nine weeks, huh?" Jonathan muttered as he and Nancy sat on her bed, having just gotten back from the doctor.

"The night before you guys left." she said. That was the last time they'd done anything, having had too many people around any other time they were together. "What are we supposed to do, Jonathan?" Nancy asked.

"I-I don't know, Nancy."

"Do we keep it? Put it up for adoption? I can't kill it, I just can't."

"I mean… I kinda want to. Keep it, I mean."

"I do too, I think… My parents are gonna kill me." she let out a frustrated groan and fell back on the bed.

"Well… I don't know how your parents are going to act, I know they

won't be happy and neither will my mom… but I know my mom will support us in whatever we decide to do."

Tuesday, January 7, 1986

Elgin, Illinois

See, the thing about Luis Rodriguez is he's a nerd, a loser with only one friend, another loser. So, he gets bullied. No one really bothers his friend because he's new, and hasn't exactly done anything to draw attention to him but Luis? Oh boy, he's got a loud mouth that gets him in trouble often, and not just with his teachers.

And that's how he finds himself running down the hall from three football players on the second day back from break. He ran his mouth and now they were chasing him, yelling about how fun it was going to be stuffing him in a locker.

Ha! Jokes on you fuckers, you won't get me this time! Or any time, come to think of it! Haha!

He ran straight to the stairwell at the end of the hall, darting into the shadows and popping into his little safe haven, lovingly titled by him, the Nerd Room.

And in that Nerd Room, was Luis' best, and only friend Will, who had a book hanging limply in his hands, eyes wide and staring at him.

"What the f-"

"Let me explain, it's not what it looks like-"

"You just appeared out of thin air!" Will exclaimed, pointing at him. "What the hell, Luis?"

"What? No I didn't! I've totally been there the whole time dude, I was waiting to scare you."

"Luis, you're too loud to even try and scare me, you were not there a second ago. I'm not an idiot."

"I didn't call you an idiot."

"Luis."

"Fine."

Luis sat down with a huff and Will turned to face him.

"What I just did was shadow walk, it's what my ma calls it." Will stared at him with an eyebrow raised. "I can teleport, but only using shadows. Shadow to shadow, you know?"

"Okay… your mom, does she have powers too?"

"No. My dad did, but he died before I was born."

"Huh." Will put the book on the table.

"You don't sound freaked out."

"Oh I am. But you will not believe the things I've seen."

"That really happened?" Luis asked as he and Will rode their bikes to Will's house.

"Yep. It sounds crazy, I know." Will chuckled. "And El does have powers, but… something happened in July and they're not working. We think she just has to recharge but it's been six months since then."

"Maybe it's because she doesn't need them anymore?" Luis suggested. "Like her work there is done, and she can be normal."

"The way she grew up… wasn't good. She was raised in a lab and tested on, with other people with powers. Experiments. She was Experiment Eleven. That's how we got the nickname El."

"Wow…"

"Yeah. But that's all she knew, growing up, was her powers, and then when she met us… that wasn't all she knew anymore, but she was based around them, they were normal for her. And now that they're

gone, she doesn't really know how to act."

El was reading a magazine in her room, waiting for Will to get home so they could watch a movie, when she found a quote in one of the later pages, that said, *"I let this presence ruin my life. And it was my fault, I created that presence, you know? Like in my head. And I couldn't do anything about it until I confronted my own emotions and did away with it myself."*

"Huh." she raised her eyebrows, reading it a few more times. She didn't know what, but it did something to her, something clicked in her head, she buzzed with energy, and a light bulb exploded over her head. She let out a shriek and covered her head with the magazine.

"El!" Will yelled, running into the room, Luis following behind him. "What happened?" he helped her up carefully, avoiding the glass.

"I, um…" she widened her eyes at him and looked up at what remained of the light bulb.

"You did that with your powers?" Will asked. She startled, looking at him in shock and then back at Luis in horror.

"Don't worry, your secret is safe with me. I have powers too." Luis told her. "That's why he told me, he caught me using them today."

"Oh."

"But El! Your powers?" Will rocked up and down on his heels. "What were you doing?" he asked.

"I was just on my bed reading the magazine." she replied, and flipped to the page the quote was on. "I read this a couple times and then the light exploded."

"Are you gonna tell Mike? Or anyone in the party?"

"I don't… I don't know? Because it might not have been real." she bit her lip.

"What, you think *that* was faulty wiring? Honey no that was some

supernatural typa shit." Luis said, raising an eyebrow. El furrowed hers at him at the use of honey.

"Um, okay. Should I try and do something else?" she asked. "Just to see?"

"Yeah! Try and pick that pencil up." Will pointed at her desk.

Luis looked so excited as she held her hand out towards the pencil. She didn't want to disappoint, so… she focused all her energy on the pencil and after a few seconds, it began to shake, and then lifted into the air. She dropped it suddenly and let out a squeal, looking at Will, who grinned at her. She clapped her hands and Luis had to sit down. Will snorted at him.

El felt something trickling out of her nose and wiped it with her hand, and groaned.

"We're back to this bullshit now?" she whined. Will busted out laughing at that. El rarely ever swore, but when she did, he found it hilarious. She couldn't help but laugh too, Luis joining in with his loud, cackling laugh.

"I love you guys." he giggled, holding his arms out to them, and the three stood there laughing and hugging, confusing Jonathan when he walked in, but neither young teen would tell him what was so funny.

Hawkins, Indiana

"Who keeps putting my name on the fridge?" Mike asked during dinner that night.

"I don't bother those things." Ted said, taking a bite of steak.

"Me neither." Nancy said, pushing her food around a bit.

"My friend!" Holly smiled.

"Her imaginary friend." Karen corrected, giving her son a smile.

"No they're real! I saw them moving the magnets!"

"You saw a person?" Mike asked.

"No. I saw the magnets move." she replied. Mike furrowed his brows and looked at his mom, who shook her head at him.

"Huh." he didn't say anything else about it.

Saturday, January 11, 1986

El jerked awake, body freezing head to toe as she came to. She was completely under the blankets, even her head, and she was curled up into a ball, tear tracks on her cheeks. Heartbreaking words from someone she loved, right on the edge of her tongue, but she couldn't remember who.

"Would you let the world die, so that I can live?"

"What the…" she muttered, sitting up and wrapping the blanket around her, eyebrows furrowed. She leaned over and looked at the clock on her bedside table. Four seventeen in the morning. She let out a low huff and untangled herself from the blankets and stood, stretching. She grabbed a note pad off her desk and wrote down what she remembered from the dream, wanting to tell Will about it later when everyone was awake. She went to the bathroom and did her business, and washed her hands. She looked at herself and despite still feeling cold, she looked like her usual self after waking up. Eyes half open, eyebrow hairs sticking up all wonky, her hair all over the place, dried blood running down her lip- wait, that wasn't usual. She flicked on the light and rubbed at her nose. It had been there a while. She grabbed a washcloth and ran it under the water, and cleaned the blood from her nose.

Had she used her powers during the night and not realized? Had she ever done that before? Well, she wouldn't know, she was asleep after all. She just shrugged it off and threw the washcloth in the wastebasket and went back to bed, wrapping herself up into a cocoon and falling asleep fairly easily.

She didn't wake up again until around ten AM, when two boys jumped on top of her, scaring her so badly she nearly threw them

across the room. And she would have, had she not been used to it by now. She let out a groan and sat up.

"Wow. You look like shit." Luis said, resting his chin on his hands as if she were telling an interesting story, crossing his ankles in the air.

"Thanks." she croaked.

"Uh oh, you're sick, aren't you?" Will asked, feeling her forehead with the back of his hand. "You're warm."

"I'm cold." she retorted, wrapping her blanket around her. He snorted.

"Do you feel bad?" he asked.

"I don't feel great. I'm cold." she repeated.

"I'll go tell mom and see if we have any medicine. I think you might have a fever." El nodded and fell back onto her pillows. Luis hopped up and followed his friend, claiming he didn't want El's germs.

A few minutes later Joyce came back into her room, the boys following close behind.

"Hey sweetie, you feeling bad?" she asked, sitting on the bed next to her. El nodded. "What's bothering you?"

"My throat hurts." she said. "And nose feels weird."

"Ah, okay, have you coughed a lot?" Joyce asked. El shrugged.

"Not since I woke up."

"Okay well, we've got some medicine but it's liquid and I know you don't like liquid, but it'll work better, m'kay?" El scrunched her nose up but agreed as her adoptive mother handed her a medicine cup and a cup of pepsi to help with the taste.

After taking the medicine, they left her alone to rest for a while, and while she was alone, she grabbed the phone beside her bed and dialed the familiar number.

"Hello?" came Ted Wheeler's voice.

"Hi Mr. Wheeler, is Mike there?" she asked.

"Hold on." he said, and she distantly heard him yelling at Mike to pick up the phone. Only a second later she heard him pick up the phone in the basement, and his dad put the kitchen phone down.

"Hello?" Mike asked.

"Hi Mike." El croaked.

"El! Hey, it's early for you." he joked. She chuckled.

"It's ten thirty." she said. "Will and Luis jumped on me again."

"Wow, rude." he said, amused.

"Sure." she replied dryly and he laughed.

"You don't sound like you feel good, are you okay?" he asked, voice turning to worry.

"Yes, just a cold." she told him. That's what Joyce had told her, so she was going along with it.

"When did you start feeling it? You sounded okay last night."

"Sometime this morning. I had a… weird? Dream earlier. At four this morning."

"Do you remember what it was about?" he asked.

"I don't… I don't think so. Something bad happened and… I just remember this one thing they said."

"What was it? You don't have to say if you don't want to."

"I wrote it down. They said "would you let the world die, so that I can live?""

"Huh, that sounds kinda… sad honestly. Like from some dramatic movie or TV show or something. Would you let the world die, so that

I can live? Sounds like a soap opera line to me." he chuckled.

El wouldn't lie, when Mike delivered the line she had dreamt, a chill ran down her spine and her breath caught in her throat. She started coughing, moving the phone away from her but he could hear Mike asking if she was okay.

"I'm okay." she told him finally. "Had a tickle in my throat."

"Oh, I get those a lot when I'm sick too." he told her.

"It's annoying."

"I know, but you'll start feeling better soon. Mrs. Byers will take care of you." she could practically see that sweet smile on his face, his voice was gentle as he spoke.

"I know she will." she replied softly. "But I miss you."

"I miss you too." he replied, sighing. "But hey, at least we get to see each other for Valentines Day! Just a little over a month to go. Plus you guys are coming next weekend."

"Yes, a month is too long though. Jonathan gets to see Nancy more often than I get to see you." At this point, Jonathan was taking his car and going to visit Nancy every weekend. It drove the entire Party insane, but no one could do anything about it.

Mike let out a groan and she had a feeling he was nodding, and said, "I know, right? How is that fair? Nancy *told* me the weekend before you guys moved that whenever she went to see Jonathan that I could come with her, or when Jonathan came to see *her*, you and Will could go with him. It's really not fair at all, I get that they're older but what the hell? Just because I can't drive yet doesn't mean I can't see you and Will more often." she could hear the pout in his voice as he ranted, and couldn't help but smile, stretching out on her bed.

"I agree. It's not fair, but I guess there's a good reason."

"It's not good enough for me." he replied. "I mean, we went so long without seeing each other once, and I know this is completely different, but it still sucks, you know? I get that *they* are making up

for lost time, but it's also not my fault that Nancy took her time with Steve and beat around the bush before getting with Jonathan." he huffed and El giggled, shaking her head at her boyfriend. He was adorable. "Do you know what beat around the bush even means? I feel like I've never said that to you." she laughed at that, and said,

"I know what it means. When you want to avoid what's really important." she quipped. He chuckled.

"Exactly what it means." he told her. She smiled.

The two talked for nearly two hours before Karen forced him to get off the phone and eat lunch, whereas it took them another ten minutes to get the "I love you's" and "see you soon's" in. But they did, promising to talk to each other that night before bed. Mike went and ate his lunch, and El took a much needed nap.

Tuesday, January 14, 1986

By Tuesday, El was back to feeling one hundred percent, and was working on some school when Will and Luis came in after school to do their own homework.

"I'm thinking when we're all done dealing with this school shit, I show you guys some more of my *talents*." Luis said. El raised her eyebrows at him.

"Do you want to? You don't have to. I can't exactly show you any of mine other than the one." she said. He shrugged.

"I don't mind. This friendship doesn't consist of a "if you show me yours, I'll show you mine" type of thing, ya know?"

"That doesn't sound good at all, and you know it." Will scolded, throwing a balled up piece of paper. "Ignore him, El, he has a dirty mind."

"Is that like happy screams?" she asked, tilting her head to the side in confusion.

"I'm sorry?" Luis asked, eyes widening.

"Happy screams." she repeated. She never got a complete answer from Max and hadn't ever asked anyone else. She had an inkling that Luis definitely wasn't the right person to ask, but didn't say anything to stop him.

"Happy screams, you say?"

"Luis, I swear to God, I will beat your ass so bad you'll wanna stay in the shadows *forever* if you say anything outta line." Will punched his shoulder and Luis yelped.

"I wasn't, my guy! I wasn't! I was only going to tell her to ask that boyfriend of hers." he said innocently. "I'm sure he knows what happy screams are."

"Oh my *God*." Will banged his head against the table, and El, startled, forgot about it for the moment and put her hands palm up under his head to stop him.

"Don't do that, you'll hurt yourself." she told him, as if it wasn't what he was aiming for. He lifted his head and gave her a small smile.

"Sorry." he muttered. "Let's do our homework so that Luis can show us his abilities."

And he did. What he could actually show them, at least. There was one he wasn't exactly sure about himself, so he didn't bother to mention it, but instead, showed them how he shadow walked, and did it with both of them, showing them how easy it was for him. He had Will throw rocks at him and created a dark shield, as he called it, and it was made up of shadows, but protected him completely, shaped almost like a dome.

"I can do smaller ones, too, like Captain America, but I feel safer if I use the dome." he'd told them.

The last one he showed them was the weapon, the one that could really help. He could draw energy from the darkness and create what he called "Shadow Bombs" which weren't really bombs, they didn't work like bombs, but they did damage to whatever they hit. He knocked bark off an entire side of a tree, looking as though it had

been hit and damaged by a car.

The adopted siblings thought it was the coolest thing ever.

Friday, January 17, 1986

"ROBIN!" Dustin yelled at the top of his lungs as he barreled into Melvalds.

"Jesus fucking Christ Henderson, warn a guy, won't you?" Steve grumbled.

"That is very disrespectful." Dustin told him, slamming a text book and a binder on the counter in front of Steve, "Where's Robin?" he asked.

"She's out sick." Steve said. "We close early today. What do you need her for?"

"Spanish is a real bitch, Steve. Who decided it was a good idea for Freshman to have to learn a new language in a new school?" he threw his hands up, knocking his hat off in the process. "Dammit."

"I'm pretty sure it was the school board that decided that."

"Well, it's stupid, and I won't stand for it. I don't understand anything other than how to roll my R's."

"And you need Robin's help with that?" Steve asked.

"Obviously. What's her address-"

"First off, I'm not giving you her address. Second, she's *sick*. And even if she wasn't I wouldn't give it to you. Why can't Lil Wheeler or Sinclair help you? Or Max?"

"Mike can barely speak as it is, let alone another language." he rolled his eyes. "And the same with Lucas, they fumble over their words now more than I ever have. I blame it on the girls."

"You have a girlfriend."

"I'm confident. They are not."

"Wow, okay."

"And Max is taking French."

"Christ, okay, but don't you guys have a new friend? Will's friend? Isn't he Mexican?"

"He's Latino, jackass, or Hispanic if you will." Steve made a face. "And just because someone is Hispanic doesn't mean they can speak Spanish."

"Doesn't it though?"

"No! That's just rude to assume. And anyways, I don't know if he can speak it or not, and even if he could, it'd be incredibly hard for him to teach me through a phone."

"True. Well, if you can calm your ass down until I get off work I can help you." Steve told him. Dustin stared at him for a moment.

"You can help me." he deadpanned. "You can speak Spanish?"

"I mean, I'm not like, fluent, but I'm pretty good at it." Dustin stared at him suspiciously. "I'm not completely stupid, Henderson!" he grumbled, grabbing a roll of paper towels behind the desk and smacking Dustin with it.

"Hey, I don't think you're stupid." Dustin huffed, snatching the paper towel roll and smacking him back.

"You'd be the first. Dustin smacked him again.

"Bull shit."

Friday, January 24, 1985

"I feel like I'm going insane, Max." Mike huffed, throwing himself onto his bed. She rolled her eyes and plopped in his desk chair. "No one believes me, I swear I saw a magnet move on it's own last night

and I didn't get *any* sleep. And Holly even says she sees them move."

"Did you get any sleep the night before?" she smirked.

"I did, yes, I didn't imagine it with my sleep deprived mind, Max."

"Okay, okay." she held her hands up. "So what? You think your house is haunted? Who would be haunting your house?"

"I don't think it's exactly… haunted. But, uh, I think it's Hopper." Max stared at the back of the boys head.

"Mike… I think you should see a doctor or therapist. Hopper's dead." she said the last part softly. "I get you're guilty over how you acted with him, before everything happened, but thinking he's a ghost in your house sounds pretty crazy. And incredibly unhealthy."

"I don't think he's a ghost!" he exclaimed, sitting up. "I don't think he's dead either."

"Then what-?"

"The Upside Down, okay?" Mike grumbled. "I think he's in there."

"Sounds a bit far fetched, don't you think? It's been way over six months, I don't think he could survive there for that long."

"I know it sounds crazy, Max but… I swear I hear him yelling my name sometimes, you know? And my name keeps popping up on the fridge with a little H next to it, like you know how you end a note? A dash and then the first letter of your first name, or just your name?" Max sighed but nodded. "And it's too tall for Holly to reach, and my parents and Nancy don't mess with them unless my mom is picking them up off the floor. And Holly can't even spell my name right, she spells it with *Y* instead of *I*." he ran a hand through his hair. "I know I sound insane but I'm *not*, I mean, Will messed with the lights when he was there, so Hopper could be trying to do the same but with magnets."

"But why wouldn't he do it with the lights?" she asked.

"I don't know… maybe cause my parents would flip the fuck out over

the lights and get all new wiring or something? I don't know, he knows them better than I do." she made a face at that. "Went to school with my dad." he told her. "And I guess knew my mom before he left town."

"What does El think about all this." Mike didn't say anything. "You haven't told her any of this, have you, Wheeler?"

"No, and it's not to be a dick. I just… it's about Hopper, and I know she doesn't like to talk about him because it upsets her so… I don't think I'd be a good boyfriend if I told her I think her dad was in the Upside Down and talking to me with magnets. It also makes me sound absolutely fucking nuts-"

"Language!" Ted called as he walked by the door. Mike let out a groan.

"Language." Max mocked and Mike snorted.

"Anyways, you know what I mean, right?" Max nodded.

"Yeah. I understand, Mike, I do. But if it gets to the point that you're hearing a full sentence or you actually see him, promise me you'll let me take you to the crazy house."

"Oh fuck off." he threw a pillow at her and she laughed.

"On a serious note, what do we do? Do you want to try and like… contact him? Ooh do you have a ouija board? We could probably use one of those."

"No, the two of us would end up welcoming demons into my house." Mike shook his head. "Besides, we don't have one but I think Dustin does, for whatever reason."

"Dustin's a weird guy."

"You're telling me, I've known him longer than you. One time he stuffed a gummy bear up his nose and…" Mike went on telling her stories about Dustin, and then eventually moved to Lucas, whereas Mike asked,

"So… have you two been talking?"

"I feel like we're having a girly conversation here." she said.

"We are, now talk." Mike motioned with his hands. She let out a cackle at that.

"We're like… civil with each other, I guess. He doesn't ignore everything I say to him anymore."

"Well, that's a start." Mike told her. "Have *you* apologized for whatever he was mad about?"

"I've tried, but when I start to he just waves his hand and tells me not to worry about it."

"Well, wave your hand right back at his ass and tell him you're sorry. He's being a stubborn dick when it comes to that."

"You're one to call someone else stubborn." she retorted. He snorted.

"I know," he agreed. "But I'm not wrong."

Sunday, February 9, 1986

Mike wondered if this is what it felt like for Mrs. Byers when Will went missing and she was convinced he was right in front of her, but he wasn't. That's how Mike feels. He's almost one hundred percent certain that Hopper is trying to contact him from the Upside Down using the magnets, but he never saw them move. He swore he heard Hopper yelling at him- he'd know that voice anywhere, as much as he'd been yelled at when he was with El.

He wasn't sleeping very well, he felt like there was an added presence in his house at all times, sure it was Hopper. But no one believed him. Well, Max did, to an extent, and she'd gone as far as to ask Dustin's ass for his Ouija board, but Mike just threw a pillow at her when she showed it to him.

"What's up with you and throwing fucking pillows at me all the time?" she'd shrieked.

"Because you're annoying." he replied.

"Ew, that sounds familiar." Mike snorted at that.

"Me and Nancy throw pillows at each other, so… yeah. Consider yourself my sister I guess."

"Awe, that's so sweet!" Max cooed, laughing when she got hit with another pillow.

"Shut up, like you don't feel the same way." he stuck his tongue out at her. She shrugged and whacked him in the head with the pillow in her hands.

Mike didn't really know what to do, other than call Mrs. Byers and ask for her opinion, or beg her to come back to Hawkins, or *something*. It wouldn't hurt to try.

"Hello?" Joyce answered the phone.

"Um, hi Mrs Byers."

"Mike! El is in the shower right now and Will and Jonathan have gone to the store-"

"No, I, um, I called because… I wanted to talk to… to you."

"Oh. Is everything okay?" she asked, unknotting the cord and taking a seat at the kitchen table.

"I don't know." the teen was quiet, his voice shaky.

"What is it, Sweetie?"

"Um… I just… last year, did- did you feel like you were going crazy?"

"I think we've established I am kind of crazy at this point, Mike." she chuckled.

"No, no, no… like… crazy because of the… the magnets?" her eyes widened and she held her breath for a moment, before speaking,

"Is-is something wrong with the magnets?" she asked.

"Yeah." he nearly whispered it. "I-I… they keep moving. Holly's letter magnets… on the fridge."

"Have you seen them move?" she asked.

"I think I saw one move once but… they keep spelling out my name. And… there's a… a lower case L that's horizontal and an H…"

"Are you sure it's not Holly doing it? Or someone else?" Joyce asked in a hopeful voice.

"I'm sure. She can't… she can't reach high enough on the fridge and… all the letters are on the bottom. Dad is too lazy to bend down and get one, so why would he do it? Nancy hasn't touched a magnet since last year and the only time mom touches one it's just to put a drawing on the fridge or pick one up that got knocked down."

"It isn't Dustin or Lucas trying to make you think it's Holly?"

"It's not any of them, Mrs. Byers. Holly can't even spell my name right. She uses a *Y* instead of an *I*, and they know that."

"Who else could it be?" she asked.

"I… I think it's Hopper."

"Mike…" she trailed off, letting out a sigh.

"Look, I know I sound crazy, but listen. There is a whole other… you know what, out there. How do we know there isn't anything else? Hell, maybe he's actually a ghost or something. I just know something's not right."

Joyce didn't say anything, for what seemed like forever. She ran a hand through her hair, and asked, "What do you want me to do, Mike? I don't… I don't know how to help you."

"Come back." he said. "Come back here soon and-and you can see for yourself that I'm not really crazy and delusional like everyone thinks I am. I swear I keep hearing someone talking in my house and El said it was probably my dad talking in his sleep but I hear it when I'm home alone and I'm not sleeping great and I need someone who

believes me. Please come back."

"Mike…"

"Please, Mrs. Byers. Something is wrong again in Hawkins."

They wouldn't be able to come until the thirteenth, because according to Joyce, she had to ask off work a few days in advance, and work her original days off prior to being off now. Jonathan had already planned to come to Hawkins on the day before, since school was out for the next two days for professional development. El and Will weren't going to go with Jonathan, because he'd outright refused to take them for whatever reason. He claimed it was because he'd only missed one or two days of school, and that Will has missed too many to miss anymore, but no one argued with him, though he was wrong He was going the day he originally planned, and the next day, Joyce, Will and El would be following him.

Wednesday, February 12, 1986

Mike was home alone for the first time in about a few weeks, and he was a little on edge. See, he heard the voice more often when he was alone, and convinced him he wasn't crazy and that it wasn't his dad talking in his sleep because he wasn't even there.

So yeah, he was on edge, and when there was a loud knock on the door, he nearly fell off the couch. It was almost five thirty in the afternoon, usually the time his dad got home, but he had a key, and was also on a business trip this week, so he was off the board of who was at the door.

"Just go look, you dimwit." Mike grumbled to himself. Whoever was knocking banged on the door again, just as Mike was about to open it. "Chill *out*! Damn!"

The first thing he saw were suits, and then he saw guns, and then he saw Martin Brenner. "Oh fuck."

"Michael Wheeler." Brenner said, grinning. "It's nice to see you again."

Shut the door and lock it. Shut the door and lock it. Mike said to

himself, but he couldn't help but stare in shock at the white haired man.

"You're coming with us. I have a few questions I'd like to ask you."

"I'm not going anywhere with you." Mike said, furrowing his eyebrows. "Goodbye." he tried to shut the door in his face, but he knew damn well it wouldn't do any good.

"Really, child?" Brenner asked, stopping the door with only a hand. He pushed it open and grabbed Mike.

"Let me go you bastard!" Mike yelled, kicking and trying to get away. Another man grabbed him and he knew he wasn't getting out of this, so he just started screaming. "LET ME GO! LET ME GO! YOU PIECE OF SHIT- HELP ME! LET ME G-!"

"Dammit, someone get the chloroform." Brenner yelled, and almost immediately a cloth was covering Mike's mouth and nose, and everything went black. "The kid definitely puts up a fight. This'll be fun."

5. Chapter Five

A new chap within five days? Can you believe?!

Anyways, I hope you guys enjoy! Please let me know what you think (Reviews make my day!) in the reviews!

Chapter Five: Code "You've Gotta Be Shitting Me"

Wednesday, February 12, 1985

Melvalds

"Hi, yes, hello, we need to talk." Dustin smacked his hands on the counter in front of him. Robin and Steve stared at him.

"He won't tell me what's going on but it's "serious"." Erica told them.

"Look, I know I said that me begging for a ride just to get candy was serious, but this is big time serious. Code "you've gotta be shitting me" man, like, bad serious. July serious." he whispered the last bit.

"Oh."

"Yeah, *oh* ." Dustin raised his eyebrows.

"I'll go let Mr. Melvald know we have an emergency, that a friend of ours got hurt or something." Robin said, before rushing off to Mr. Melvald's office. Steve started banging his head on the counter until Erica grabbed him by the hair to stop him.

"Ow!" he yelped. "Let me go." he grumbled.

"Stop banging your head. We need you somewhat functioning this time."

"Fine." Steve huffed and she let him go. He immediately pulled out a compact mirror and fixed his hair, all the while casting glares at Erica.

"Really? You're worried about your hair?" Dustin scowled. "Mike could be getting kidnapped as we speak, and you're worried about your hair?"

"WHAT?" Steve and Erica yelled.

"ROBIN, HURRY UP WE GOTTA GO!" Dustin yelled. She came running back, middle finger in the air.

"We'll go in my car." she told them. "It's my grandmas old minivan, so enough for however many people we end up with."

In the car, Steve turned around to look at Dustin.

"Tell me what the fuck is going on, *right fucking now Henderson* !"

"I was waiting to talk to my girlfriend, right? Well, I accidentally switched channels and I heard Russians again." he said. "They were speaking in English for the most part and… they're being lead by an American. Martin Brenner." he said. "From what I gathered, he wants to get Mike so that he can get information on where El is. He thinks El can control the Demogorgons or anything from the Upside Down."

"Step on it, Robin, make this piece of shit go as fast as it can."

"Hey!" Robin snapped. "Shut your mouth." but she did as she was told.

"Go to Mike's house." he added.

"I thought Brenner was *dead* ." Steve ran a hand through his hair. "What the *hell* ."

"We did too. But I heard his voice and I heard them calling him by name. And you can't forget a voice like that." Dustin shook his head.

"Well I'm sure Mike's fine, he knows how to handle himself." Robin said, biting her lip.

The Upside Down/Wheeler's House

Hopper was sitting in the front lawn of the Wheeler's when he heard Mike start screaming. The kid was supposed to be alone for a few hours, Hopper had learned, having been listening in to conversations, so he decided to sit and wait until someone got home. He'd got a weird feeling in his gut that something was gonna happen, so he wanted to stay close.

"LET ME GO! LET ME GO! YOU PIECE OF SHIT- HELP ME! LET ME G-!"

Hopper jumped up quickly, following the sound, and faintly heard the word "chloroform" and Mike went silent.

"The kid definitely puts up a fight. This'll be fun." he heard a familiar voice say. "Let's get him to the lab."

The fucking lab, of course.

"I really fucking hope that's not where all the monsters are." Hopper muttered to himself as he took off running towards the lab.

He couldn't help but feel hope that this was his way out. Maybe they've reopened the gate? Which wouldn't be good, but it would be a way out, that's for sure.

It took him awhile to get to the lab from there- he's old, *still* not in the best shape, he gets out of breath easily, cut him some slack.

"I'm too old for this *shit* ." he muttered to himself.

Upon seeing the lab, Hopper stopped dead in his tracks, realizing exactly what they wanted Mike for. They wanted El. There'd be no other reason for them to do anything to him. " *Shit* ." he took off, testing his luck, and got into the building easily. As he opened the door, he heard a deafening screech and whipped around. In the distance, above the trees, he saw a dark, smokey arm- or whatever you want to call it- shooting up into the sky, others following with it.

" *Fuck* ."

The Wheeler's House

Fifteen minutes after Mike is kidnapped

"The doors open." Erica said as they pulled to a harsh stop in the driveway of the Wheelers. She was right, the front door was cracked open the slightest bit. Steve darted out of the car and into the house.

"Wheeler!" he yelled. "Mike, are you here?"

"Son of a bitch." Dustin huffed after they looked through the house quickly, making sure he wasn't asleep or something, but they knew better. "Son of a bitch, we were too late." he put a hand on his forehead.

"You've *got* to be shitting me." Robin muttered.

"Why is it I can never protect you little shits? I mean seriously, something *always goes wrong* !" Steve threw his hands in the air.

"Well, instead of freaking out, let's go look for him?" Erica suggested.

"Where? Where could we look for him, Erica." Steve asked. "I genuinely wanna know so we *can* ."

"The lab." she said simply. "Specifically, the basement is where they'd probably take him if that's where he's at." the three older teens looked at her, eyebrows raised.

"How do you know they're taking him to the lab?" Robin asked.

"Where else would they take him? The mall? That's burnt down? No, I don't think so. And what other place would they even consider taking him?"

"I don't know, maybe the cabin?" Steve suggested. "For some weird reason, I don't know."

"No, not the cabin you idiot." Erica huffed. Steve threw his arms in the air again.

"Let's go to the fucking lab, I guess. Like it's gonna do any good if he's even there."

The Lab/Upside Down
Twenty minutes after Mike was kidnapped

Hopper was cautious as he walked through the lab. He figured they weren't going to be in the actual building, it would raise suspicion out in the real world, of course, but he checked a few rooms and stood quietly to make sure he didn't hear voices anyways. Then, he made his way down the stairs- he didn't know how many staircases their were, but he knew his legs would not be happy with him later when he finally reached the basement, which wasn't really a basement at all. An underground hell story if you ask him. When he thinks about a basement, he thinks of the Wheeler's. A place to go where you feel safe, but *no* one could possibly *ever* feel safe in this place, and not just because he was in the Upside Down version.

The place was just as horrible as he remembered. Long corridors, a door or two on each. A rarity, really. He stopped at each he passed, though, and felt dread seeping into his chest the closer he got to the gate. He could hear voices, but nothing to do with Mike. This was where they were operating, like he'd thought. He reached the room with the gate much quicker than he'd hoped, and took a chance with the tall ladder over the edge to the floor. It creaked, and it groaned, and he nearly fell off a few times, losing his footing, or one of the steps breaking. He did, however, fall about four feet because the bottom part of the ladder was gone. He barely managed to stick the landing, despite it being a fairly short drop.

The *only* way he was able to see any of this, was thanks to the giant pulsating, bright gate in front of him. It was as big as he remembered, looking as though it hadn't been opened back up long. There were no monsters around, though, and he was thankful, but he knew this wasn't gonna be very fun, and hoped that he'd be able to change into one of those full jumpsuits he'd worn once.

Hopper stepped closer to the gate, sound roaring in his ears as he reached it, and scratched his chin. He'd grown a beard in his time here, it was cold here, so it helped. His hair was long, and he was sure there were a few more grey streaks in it by now. Hopper reached a hand out and squeezed his eyes shut as he pushed through the gate.

He couldn't describe what it felt like, he just knew it was disgusting,

but it was easy to go through, as if it had been worn down from multiple entrances and exits. *Had people come inside here? And I didn't notice?* He thought as he kicked his left leg through, and pulled himself completely through. *God I hope there aren't any guards out here* .

There weren't, so Hopper was free to suck in a huge breath of fresh air and immediately fall into a coughing fit.

"Fuck!" he choked out, dropping his gear and taking his wet, gooey jacket and pants off, wiping his hands on a clean jumpsuit and putting on a new one, all the while coughing. He didn't have any time to spare. He took a deep, sputtering breath and swallowed thickly, relieved when the coughing stopped. "Okay, okay, let's see here." he looked at the new zipper in front of him. He remembered watching the old one get unzipped for he and Joyce to enter this place. God, it was so long ago now, it seemed. Not even three years.

The Lab/Hawkins

Thirty minutes after Mike was kidnapped

When Mike came to, two things happened. He quickly realized he was restrained, and that he was gonna puke. He leaned over as best he could and puked up everything in his stomach.

"Ugh, that is disgusting. I didn't know chloroform did this." a strange voice said from the corner.

"Shut it, Cheslav." another voice ordered. It was familiar.

Mike gagged and spit what was left in his mouth on the floor. His eyesight was blurry.

"Stop that." Cheslav hissed, suddenly in his line of sight.

"S'not m'fault, ya dick." Mike slurred.

He was shivering, the room he was in cold, and all he wore was a short sleeved t- shirt and jeans, no shoes, no socks.

Then before he could even blink, he was soaked *and* shivering.

"What the *fuck* !" he exclaimed, trying to kick at whoever poured water on him. One of them ran a dry towel over his face harshly, one time to get the water out of his face, another just to be an ass.

"We're going to ask you questions." Cheslav said.

"I'm not going to answer." Mike retorted, only to get punched in the stomach. "I wouldn't do that if I were you." he choked. "I'll puke on you."

"I'll kill you." Cheslav threatened.

"Stop, Cheslav." the other voice said. Another person came into view, and Mike's eyes nearly crossed. God, his head hurt. "Michael Wheeler, you will answer any question we ask, or you will be punished." Mike just let out a snort and tried to focus on the man in front of him. White hair, he could tell, a suit…

"Brenner." Mike said, voice filled with hate.

"You'd be correct." Brenner grinned, but Mike couldn't see. His vision just wouldn't clear up. "Cheslav, would you like to ask the first question?"

"Yes." a big, burly man stood in front of Mike, close to his face.

"Your breath stinks." Mike groaned.

"Where is Martin Brenner's daughter?" he asked, making sure to blow his breath in Mike's face.

"She's dead." Mike spat, making sure spit got on Cheslav's face. He backed up, wiping at his face with his sleeve.

"See, that's where you're wrong, child." Brenner said. "We found a picture of you and her together, at the cabin where she and her late "Adopted father" lived."

Fuck

"She's dead." he repeated. "She died in July."

"You don't sound very broken up about it." Cheslav said, slapping Mike, *hard* .

"No, because I know she doesn't have to worry about you mother fuckers-" Brenner hit him this time, and he could feel the blood coming from his brand new split lip. Mike glared at him.

"Knife?" Cheslav asked, hopeful.

"Yes." Brenner said.

"You guys suck at this." Mike spit. "Already bringing the knife out after one question. Stupid." God, he knew he'd regret all this talking back, but he was one hundred percent not in his right mind. He was freezing, his head felt like it was about to explode, he wasn't having a good time. He would not recommend.

"Coming into this we knew you'd be difficult." Brenner said. "You love my daughter-"

"She's not your daughter!" Mike yelled. "Is that what you're telling these people?"

"Cut him once. On the arm." Brenner ordered, and suddenly Mike's entire arm was stinging. He bit the inside of his mouth to keep from screaming in pain. "She is my daughter, child."

"She's just an experiment to you." Mike hissed, chest heaving. "You took her-"

"Again."

His arm stung even worse than before. A searing pain.

" *Stop* ." Mike cried out, squirming, trying to get out of the ropes.

"Then stop telling lies!" Brenner punched him in the face, hard enough to make his nose bleed, but it wasn't broken. He didn't think, at least.

"I'm *not lying you piece of shit.* "

" *Again* ." Brenner hissed. This time, he aimed for Mike's thigh, instead of cutting, he jabbed the knife into the side of Mike's thigh, close to the knee and Mike shrieked in pain.

All of a sudden, alarms started blaring and a voice came over Cheslav's radio.

"CREATURE HAS ESCAPED. REPEAT, CREATURE HAS ESCAPED. NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET. OVER."

"Go help. I'll take it from here." Brenner told him. Leaving the knife, Cheslav ran out of the room.

Mike squeezed his eyes shut, tears slipping out easily. He heard Brenner moving around and heard the click of a gun. Mike tensed at the sound, and started trembling at the feel of the cool metal against his forehead.

"I don't want to kill you, Michael. I want to know where Eleven is. She's *mine* ."

"She's not yours. I'd rather *die* than tell you where she is." Mike fired back, shaking his head, not opening his eyes.

"She is MINE!" Brenner yelled.

Before Brenner could pull the trigger, or hit Mike again, or whatever he was going to do, the door slammed open.

Brenner dropped the gun, startled, and Mike- Mike, who was hardly in his right mind to know to do this- kicked the gun as hard as he could, considering he was tied to a chair. He thinks it may have went off when it hit the wall, but something- or someone- was barreling towards the two. Brenner was tackled to the ground before he knew it, and he was getting his face punched in.

"You sorry piece of *shit* !" the man above him yelled. "You're fucking insane!" Brenner tried his best to fight back, barely getting a few weak hits in, before the man stopped and grabbed Brenner by the collar.

While Brenner was getting his ass beat in front of him, Mike took the time to try and look at his injuries. His vision was still blurred to hell, but he could tell that none of it was good, and that was after the fact that he was in a *lot* of pain. A knife was jammed into his thigh, blood slowly seeping through his jeans. His left arm had too, deep gashes going the same way. Slanted, beginning on the outer side and going in. He wondered if they were deep enough to cause him to bleed out. Considering his luck, most likely.

He looked out at the sight before him, eyes crossing again as he tried to focus on who was in front of him and beating Brenner like there was no tomorrow. He heard the voice yelling, he knew it was familiar, but he could hardly remember his own name. He felt blood dripping from his nose, and he scrunched it up, which didn't help the pain and he let out a small noise. The mysterious man stopped when he heard it, and glanced back at Mike for a moment. All Mike knew was that the guy had a bushy ass beard.

"You're gonna pay for this." he heard the man hiss at Brenner, before lifting his head up and slamming him back down, knocking him out. "Piece of shit." he muttered as he stood, and rushed back over to Mike. "Hey kid, kid, look at me." Hopper said, tapping Mike's cheek. Mike furrowed his brows at the man.

"Wha- Hopper?" he slurred.

"Yeah kid, it's me." Hopper gave him a grin. "I'm not dead yet. And neither are you, can you tell me everywhere you're hurt?" he asked, using a different knife to cut the ropes.

"Ugh… what the fuck." Mike muttered. He rubbed at his eyes once his hands were free, successfully smearing blood on to his cheek. "Uhh, there's a… knife." Mike muttered. Hopper looked down, thinking that for whatever reason Mike was talking about the one in his hand, and then saw the one lodged into his thigh.

"Son of a *bitch* ." Hopper hissed. "What the fuck? Why are they doing this shit?"

"Want El." he muttered. "Wouldn't tell them. Talked back."

"Goddammit." Hopper huffed, glancing back at the door every few seconds. Mike was trembling so hard it was difficult for Hopper to cut the ropes on his legs without hurting him again, but somehow managed.

"M'cold."

"That's what chloroform will do to you." Hopper told him. "It'll wear off in a few hours." Mike just groaned, letting his head fall back. Hopper grabbed the towel that Cheslav had used earlier and used his knife to cut it, and wrapped it around Mike's leg, around the knife, as best he could, to help stop the bleeding. He couldn't take the knife out yet, not yet. He didn't want to risk the kid bleeding out from hitting an artery. That's the last thing they needed here. "I'm gonna get you somewhere warm as soon as I can, kid, okay?" Hopper told him. Mike groaned again. He took the rest of the towel and tied it around Mike's arm to help the bleeding to the cuts. They were deep, but they looked like they'd be fine. He wouldn't die from them.

After, Hopper poked his head out of the door and looked down each side of the hall. No sign of anyone, no noise. He picked up the flamethrower and put it on, making sure everything was where it was supposed to be and not flopping around, and went back to Mike.

"All clear." Hopper told him. Mike nodded and just sat there, staring at him. "Come on, kid." Hopper helped him up and he yelped when he put weight on his leg.

" *Shit* ." Mike whined. "Is this what Steve felt like all those times he got his ass beat?"

"Stop swearing." Hopper grunted, lifting the scrawny teen up a bit higher. "I know you're hurting kid, but you're gonna have to help me out a bit here."

"Yeah I'll try." Mike mumbled something under his breath that Hopper didn't catch, but ignored. Mike limped next to Hopper, leaning most of his weight on him, but he did try, Hopper will give him that.

It took around ten minutes for them to get out, and Hopper had no

idea how they did it without getting caught by a guard, or running into the Demogorgon. Hopper dreaded that the most, because he'd have to literally drop Mike and use the flamethrower against it, and he really didn't want to do that.

Thankfully, he didn't, and he managed to get them out of the lab safely. Well, for the most part, they were safe. Mike was in a mess, but he was alive, and he'd be fine.

Forty-five minutes after Mike is kidnapped
The Wheeler's yard

Lucas was on his way back to his house, having gone to the Wheeler's to talk to Mike about something, when he saw her. Max was storming down the street towards the Wheeler's house.

"No one's home!" he called to her. She stopped in the driveway.

"What?" she called back. He jogged towards her and repeated.

"No one's home."

She let out a huff and stomped her foot like a three year old having a tempertanturm. And he'd seen many, with his sister, *and* Mike's little sister.

"Um, what's up?" Lucas asked her.

"Well, since you asked, my step father is the biggest fucking dick on this planet, and we all thought it was Billy. He got mad at me because I was listening to music and Billy's favorite song came on, and he started talking shit about him and my mom just stood there and let him. Just fucking stood there and let him talk shit about his dead son. What kind of bullshit is that? *And* Neil confessed and said that he just threw all of Billy's stuff away instead of putting it in storage like he said. Just threw it all in a dumpster and never looked back."

"That's fucked up."

"Right?" Lucas nodded in agreement.

"Uh, why'd you come to Mike's then?"

"He's like my best friend now and I was gonna make him take me to the pool." she told him. Lucas raised his eyebrows.

"The pool? Like, Steve's pool or the public pool?"

"Public, you idiot. Where Billy was a lifeguard. All the girls that were in love with him insisted that no one bothered his locker. Just leave it how he had it, you know?" Lucas nodded, but he did not, in fact, know that. "I want to break in and get something of his."

"You can't wait until summer?"

"I'm mad, and I want to do it." she replied. "I'm *gonna* do it, whether someone's with me or not, but *someone* has decided to just disappear today, so." she shrugged.

"I'll take you." Lucas offered. She eyed him. "I mean, we've rode together before, so…" he shrugged.

"Can I trust you to *not* get us caught?" she asked.

"Of course! You'd have to worry about *Mike* getting you caught. If you didn't know, Mike can barely walk straight, and would make the most noise."

"Like you do any better." she rolled her eyes. "But let's go."

She followed him to his bike, and it was a little tighter of a fit, but it worked out, and they were off.

It was dark when they arrived, and no one else was in sight.

"You have a flashlight on that thing don't you?" she asked him. He nodded, and turned the light on his bike on. It wasn't as bright as it used to be, but it did the job. She pulled a bobby pin out of her jacket pocket and started messing with the lock as Lucas kept watch.

"Got it!" she said, holding the padlock in her hand as the chains hit the ground with a loud *clang* . "Shit. Well, it's a good thing there's no one around I guess." Lucas snorted and shrugged.

"I guess."

They went inside the gate, closing it, and putting the chains back around it to make it seemed locked, in case someone did come by. Walking around the pool, Max cringed.

"I figured they'd like, cover the pool or something. That's what they did back in California during fall and winter."

"I don't know, I thought they did too. Maybe they just forgot or something this year." he shrugged.

"Well it's gross in there. Can't even see the bottom." Lucas nodded in agreement and they continued on.

The door to the locker room was harder to pick, because it was a normal door lock, but Max got it, and they went in. Lucas flipped a light switch and a single light came on, just barely brightening the room.

"It doesn't look like all of them are locked." Lucas said, crouching down to look at the bottom row.

"Yeah, it's winter. No one's working here now."

"No shit." he muttered.

She rolled her eyes and found the ones that were locked- there were three. Probably Billy's and Heather's lockers. She wasn't sure who the third one could be, but she shrugged it off and went to picking.

"Of course, the last fucking one I open is right." she huffed. Lucas watched her dig around in the locker until she came out with a little grin on her face and a hand holding a lighter. He raised an eyebrow at her.

"A lighter?" he asked. "There isn't anything better?"

"Hey!" she threw a towel at his face. "There's clothes and shit and a broken pair of sunglasses, so this is all I got. Plus, I can just refill it and keep using it, asshole." she grumbled, closing the locker and locking it again.

He doesn't say anything else, he just watches her lean against the rows of lockers and slides down it until she's sitting on the floor. He sits where he was standing, a foot or two away from her, and they sit silently. She flicks the lighter on and off for a while, that being the only sound, until,

"You know I-" Max started.

"I wanted to-" Lucas interrupted.

"Go ahead." they said together, and looked at each other. Lucas snorted and Max grinned at him, shaking his head.

"You go first." Lucas told her. She nodded.

"You know I've been trying to apologize." she started. "Not *just* to you, but *mainly* to you, you know?" Lucas nodded.

"Yeah, I know." he sighed. "I just… I don't know, I'm stubborn I guess. Didn't wanna hear it for a long time. Or say it. What I said the day we broke up for the last time still stands, to an extent. I'm sorry for being as… harsh as I was, because I didn't have to stoop that low, but I think now you know why I was the way I was that day." she nodded.

"I do, and no you didn't have to stoop so low, but I kinda deserved it. I was a bitch to you and Mike, and probably everyone else at one point." he just shrugged at that.

"I wouldn't call you a bitch."

"Because I'd beat your ass if you did, but that's not my point. I'm sorry for being controlling and breaking up with you for bullshit reasons. That's not how relationships are supposed to work."

"They're not, no, but no one really knows how they work, I guess. There's not some perfect way to be a couple."

"Actually, Mike and El are a pretty good one." Max snickered. Lucas rolled his eyes but laughed.

"They're not perfect either, but damn if their love isn't like a fairy tale. I swear it was love at first sight for them. Mike pretty much just

shined a flashlight in El's face in the pouring rain and they stared at each other for like three minutes before anyone did anything." Max snorted.

"Really?" she asked, eyebrows raised.

"Nah, it was only for like thirty seconds because we were all shocked so…" he shrugged. She laughed.

"So, can we forgive and not necessarily forget?" she asked. He nodded and held out his hand.

"Friends?" he asked.

"Friends." she confirmed, shaking his hand. "Thanks for not trying to get me to do the spit thing you guys do-"

Before she could continue, there was a loud crash coming from the room next to them. They stood quickly.

"What the hell was that?" Lucas asked. Max shrugged and slowly started backing away, shaking her head.

"I don't know, but I don't want to stick around to find out-" she cut herself off with a scream when a giant form slammed its way through the door, the door nearly falling off its hinges. It stuck its long legs through the door and tried to pull itself through, but it was stuck for a moment.

"WHAT THE FUCK!" Lucas shrieked. "Oh *hell* no." he turned on his heel and grabbed Max, running for the locker door.

"What the hell IS THAT THING?" she yelled.

"I DON'T KNOW!"

Lucas let her go as they ran towards the gate, but Max was distracted, looking back to see what was chasing them. It looked like it was from the Upside Down, that's for sure, but it wasn't any Demogorgon or Demodog they'd ever seen, but a massive fucking *spider* , and that just made it worse. It meant it was faster, and could probably climb up a damn wall.

She didn't get a chance to look at it very long, because before she could register what was happening, she let out a shriek as she fell into the pool, the lighter flying out of her hand and onto the concrete surrounding the pool.

"You've gotta be *shitting* me!" she yelled when she reemerged.

"Oh shit, oh no, that's not good." Lucas exclaimed, turning around to see what happened. Thankfully, the spider was not coming for him. Unfortunately, it was after Max, but she was in the murky water, and the spider didn't seem to like the water.

Every time it touched the water, it jerked its leg back out of the water and hissed.

" *Shit* ." Lucas smacked his forehead, "MAX! GET TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE POOL!" he yelled to her and took off running towards the spider. It didn't pay him any mind, so he was able to get behind it without worrying about it turning on him. He spotted the lighter on the ground a few feet behind the spider, so he grabbed it and tucked it into his pocket. He took a deep breath and ran up behind the spider and kicked it, sending it tumbling into the pool. Then, he ran around to Max and helped her out of the water. They didn't look back this time, they just ran to the gate and undid the chains, rushing out and doing them up again, along with the lock, as if that would do anything against the massive spider. Fortunately, it didn't seem like they'd have to worry about it, because no matter how hard it tried, it just couldn't keep itself above the water- thrashing it's legs, water splashing out onto the concrete. But it sank deeper the harder it tried. They watched until it finally stopped moving, which did take a few minutes, but it did, and sank until they couldn't see it anymore.

"Well." Lucas said, taking the lighter out of his pocket. "That was fun. Here's your lighter."

"How'd you get it?" she asked ignoring the first part. She took it from him and flicked it, and it lit.

"It just flew out of your hand when you fell I guess." he shrugged. "I saw it before I kicked the spider in and grabbed it."

"Oh, well, thanks." she gave him a small smile. She was shivering violently as she looked up at him.

"Oh shit, here." he shrugged his jacket off and put it around her shoulders. "I know it won't help much right now but it's better than nothing." he told her. "Let's get you back to my house, you can warm up there." She nodded and he picked up his bike.

"This is gonna be a story to tell, huh?" Max asked as they rode away from the pool.

"Yeah, what should we call this thing? A demospider?"

"I mean, it works." she chuckled. "A fucking demospider. What's next?"

One hour after Mike is kidnapped, ten minutes after he is rescued by Hopper

"Just sitting here is doing nothing." Steve said as he looked at the lab through binoculars. The four were literally sitting in the trees, watching for any sign of movement at the lab, but saw nothing. They'd been sitting there for an hour now, for what, Steve didn't know. "They could be torturing him in there and we're just sitting in the damn trees."

"Well, if you'd look more closely, you'd see movement out there, ass hat." Dustin said, throwing a stick at him.

"Wait what?" Steve put the binoculars back up to his eyes so fast he almost gave himself a black eye. It took him a minute or so to see what Dustin was talking about, but sure enough, there was a figure moving towards the fence around the building.

"Who the hell?" he muttered. He tossed the binoculars into a bag and scrambled down the side of the tree. He grabbed the bag on his way down and the others followed after him.

"That's Mike." Dustin said. "And some big dude is pretty much carrying him."

"Well let's not just stand here!" Erica huffed, throwing her hands in the air. "There's a hole in the fence down there, I'm sure that's where they're heading." she told them, pointing.

"Shit." Steve took off running towards the hole in the fence, and the rest of the group followed closely. "HEY!" he yelled as they got closer. "MIKE!"

"Harrington?" a familiar voice called back. Steve ducked under the hole in the fence and pointed at the remaining three.

"Stay there." he told them and rushed toward Mike and the person carrying him. As he got closer, he realized it was *Hopper* . " *Hopper* ?" he asked, eyebrows pinched together in confusion.

"Hey Steve!" Mike waved his arm at him.

"Ignore him, he was knocked out with chloroform, tortured for a few minutes, and doesn't really know what's going on."

"I *do* know what's going on!" Mike slurred, head falling forward for a second. "I got my ass beat because I talked back to the Russian. Steve, is this how you felt?" Mike asked seriously. "I have a knife stuck in my leg, Steve."

"What the *hell* ?"

"A *knife* Steve." Mike said, nodding as if agreeing with himself.

"I, yeah, I see that."

"It doesn't feel good."

"You wanna help me get him somewhere warm before he freezes to death? Look at the kid, he's vibrating like a damn chihuahua."

"I'm cold."

"Yeah, come on. We've got a lot of talking to do." Steve said, going to Mike's other side and helping him walk along with Hopper. "ROBIN! GO START THE CAR!"

After ten minutes of hauling Mike's scrawny ass to the car, they made it. Dustin and Erica had gone with her to search for the blankets Robin said she kept inside it, and had them ready to cover Mike the second he was in the van.

"I can't fucking *see* ." he grumbled, flopping back against the door as everyone else squeezed in. He had his legs stretched out in the back seat over Robin and Dustin's laps.

"Stop saying fuck." Hopper said as he took off down the road. He hadn't driven in months, so he was a little out of practice.

"He's not gonna stop saying it." Dustin said. "Why has he still got a knife embedded in his leg?"

"Because I don't want to risk cutting an artery and him bleeding out." Hopper said.

"So we're taking him to the hospital?" Erica asked.

"No. We're going to a pharmacy so that you can go inside and get supplies we need and then we're going to Murray's."

"Do you have money?" Dustin asked. "Cause I'm broke."

"Do I look like I have money." Hopper deadpanned.

"True."

"I have some." Erica said, reaching in her bag and pulling out a wad. "Hopefully this is enough."

"I'd hope so, damn." Dustin muttered.

Hopper came to an abrupt stop in the parking lot of the pharmacy.

"You need to get rubbing alcohol, some towels or rags, the best painkillers they have on the shelves, some kind of ointment or whatever to put on the cuts, medical tape, and a lot of gauze. And a couple bottles of water." he told Steve, who nodded.

"Oh, are you guys going inside?" Mike asked. "Cause I want

something to drink."

"What do you want?" Erica asked him.

"Uhhh water." he said after a minute. She made a face at him but nodded, and got out of the car with Steve.

"And hurry up!" Hopper yelled. Then he turned in his seat to look at the three in the back. "You think you two can help me get him in the way back?"
"Like the trunk?" Dustin asked.

"If you wanna call it that. There's space for him to stretch his leg out and for me to do what I need to do."

"What are you gonna do?"

"I need to get the knife out." Hopper said.

"Uh uh." Mike shook his head. "This knife is staying in me until I know I won't die." Mike stated.

"You're not gonna die." Hopper huffed. "I'll be glad when you're in your right mind again."

"He hasn't been in his right mind in a while, Hop." Dustin quipped. "He's been convinced you were a ghost and haunting his house by moving magnets on the fridge."

"I didn't say he was a *ghost* , *Dustin* ." Mike said, smacking him on the shoulder. "I said he was in the Upside Down like Will was."

"Well, I have been trying to contact him." Hopper said. "I was in the Upside Down." Dustin and Robin stared at him for a moment while Mike picked at his fingernails, squirming uncomfortably.

"You were in the Upside Down, for seven months?" Dustin squeaked. Hopper nodded. " *How* ?"

"A long story. We'll worry about that later, but for now, let's get him in the back."

By the time they got the teen in the back, Erica and Steve had come back out.

"Harrington, do you know how to get to Murrays place?" Hopper asked.

"Uh, no."

" *Shit* , well, I'll give you directions." he told him which interstate he needed to get on and turned his attention back to Mike as everyone got settled in their seats. He was sipping his water. "Hey, kid, I'm gonna clean you up some, okay?" Hopper told him. Mike nodded and put the top back on his water.

They'd bought a small case of water so that it wasn't too cold for him, so Hopper broke one out and opened it. He soaked a rag with it and started wiping some of the blood off his face. Mike got this blank look in his eyes as he stared ahead, and once Hopper cleaned the blood from his face, he tapped his cheek.

"You good, Wheeler?"

"Yeah." Mike nodded. "You look weird without your mustache." he told him. Hopper rolled his eyes.

"Yeah, well, it's kinda hard to shave in the Upside Down." he retorted.

"Oh." Mike nodded. "My head hurts."

"I'd be concerned if it wasn't."

"So you're not concerned now?" Mike asked, furrowing his brows.

"Oh no, I'm very concerned." Hopper told him. "But you're gonna be alright and we'll get you fixed up in no time."

"Oh. Thank you." Mike told him.

"Of course, kid."

Hopper cleaned up the cuts on his arms, and they definitely needed stitches, but he was going to do his best for now and clean it with

both water and rubbing alcohol- which Mike did *not* like, and sobered him up a bit, and wrapped them tightly with gauze.

Hopper was not looking forward to taking the knife out, and was almost tempted to wait until they got to Murray's, but that was still a ways away, and the sooner the better is what he learned.

"Alright, hey kid?" Hopper looked up at Mike. "You with me?"

"Uh huh." Mike nodded.

"Are you still cold?" he nodded again. "There any more blankets up there?" he called. A thick, fluffy blanket was thrown to him, and he wrapped it around Mike's shoulders. "Alright, there we go. I'm gonna need you to bite down on this." he held up a rolled up stack of gauze. Mike made a face. "I've gotta take the knife out and I don't want you bite your tongue off." Mike's eyes widened but he opened his mouth and let Hopper put it there. He bit down on it and Hopper took the ripped up towel off his leg- which was now nearly soaked in blood.

"Okay, okay. Henderson! Uh, and whatever your last name is." Hopper barked.

"Buckley."

"What?" Dustin turned to look at him.

"I need you two to turn around and face me since you're in the back, and hand me anything you need. Also, did any of you learn where arteries are in school?"

"Yeah, depending on how long the knife is, it should be okay to take out." Robin said. "It's not completely buried in his leg, but most of the main arteries are up higher in the thigh and closer to the inside of it." Hopper stared at her for a second. "What? I go to the library when I get bored and read random books."

"Okay." Hopper nodded. He took his knife and cut Mike's jeans around his knee, giving Hopper room to work with. The wound itself definitely didn't look too great, and not just because there was a knife in it. "Alright, hand me another wad of gauze and someone give him a hand to squeeze."

Robin handed him the gauze and Dustin held his hands out to Mike, who took them, slightly confused. He wasn't confused when Hopper counted to three and yanked the knife out, though.

"Mother *fucker* !" Mike yelled around the gauze in his mouth, squeezing the *shit* out of Dustin's hands. Mike rocked forward a few times as Hopper worked.

The wound wasn't pouring blood like Hopper thought it would, but it was bleeding, and there'd definitely be a few blood stains on the carpet. As soon as he took the knife out, he put the wad of gauze against it and applied pressure. Mike whimpered and squeezed his eyes shut.

"I'm sorry kid." Hopper told him. "I need another was but of the wider gauze." Hopper said to Robin, who quickly handed it to him. "And now tape." she ripped off a few pieces and he wrapped the gauze up tightly with the medical tape, slightly relieved that blood wasn't immediately soaking through the gauze.

Mike spit the gauze out and stared at Hopper.

"You *suck* ." he slurred, before promptly passing out against the window, hands falling from Dustin's and into his lap.

"Hop!" Dustin shrieked. "Oh my God, did he die? Oh my God."

"He just passed out, Jesus Christ, Henderson." Hopper shook his head. "I figured it'd happen soon, I'm surprised it didn't happen *sooner* ."

Hopper carefully moved Mike so that he was lying down, and put one of the regular sized towels he didn't use under Mike's head for a pillow. He made sure that the blankets were tucked around him and leaned against the back window, running a hand through his hair.

"So…." Steve started, after a few minutes of silence. "How long is this drive?"

Murray's Warehouse

Murray pulled his usual shit when they arrived, making them look at

the camera and ask questions before letting them in.

"Why didn't you say there was an injured child? I'd have let you in immediately!" he exclaimed, throwing his hands in the air.

"Oh shut it, Baldy."

"It's too late for a six year old to be out, what are you doing here?"

"I'm eleven, you bald headed bastard." she huffed, and sat down in a chair. He made a face and nearly fell when he realized that it was *Hopper* who was helping carry the injured kid.

" *Jim* ?" he gasped. "I thought you were dead!"

"Nope. Where can we put him?" he gestured to the kid.

"Uh, on the couch." he pointed. Hopper and Steve put Mike on the couch, and Hopper lifted Mike's legs and sat under them, elevating them slightly.

"Jim-I-Where have you *been* ?" Murray asked, sitting across from him.

"The Upside Down." he replied, leaning back on the couch, finally able to relax a bit.

"You say it so casually." Dustin said, making a face.

"I'm tired, Henderson, give me a break."

"Understandable."

"What should we do?" Steve asked. "Do we call Mrs. Byers?" Hopper ran a hand through his hair.

"I don't know." he sighed. "I… I want to see her and El as soon as possible, but… what time is it?"

"Going on eleven thirty." Dustin replied, checking his watch.

Hopper bit his lip, there was a slight chance that Joyce could be up- it took her awhile to fall asleep back before July happened, but now… he didn't know.

"One of you call her." he decided. "If everyone thinks I'm dead, well… I don't think me calling out of the blue would be a good thing."

"I got you. Hey Murray, do you have any food? If so, you should make Hopper something because who knows what he's been eating."

"Oh God, *please* , I need something other than deformed rabbit and deer." everyone cringed at that, but didn't ask questions. Murray got up to make him food, and Dustin called Joyce. It took two tries, but she eventually answered.

"Hello? Who is this?" Joyce asked, voice rough from sleep.

"Mrs. Byers! Hi, it's Dustin!"

"Dustin? Why are you still awake? It's late."

"Well, we have a few problems and a surprise for you guys and we require your assistance as soon as possible."

"What's going on?"

"I'd rather not say on the phone. Know what I mean?" he asked, wiggling his eyebrows even though she couldn't see him.

"Oh. It can't wait until tomorrow? We were planning on leaving to come your way."

"Uh no, I don't think so. We like, really need your assistance- ask Will, if a party member requires assistance-"

"Yeah I know. Who are you with right now?"

"Oh we're at Murrays." he replied. "The rest of the Scoops and I plus two others plus Murray himself."

"Even Erica?"

"Even Erica."

"Jesus Christ, Dustin, why do you have the poor girl out so late?"

"Have you met this child? She won't take no for an answer Mrs.

Byers!"

"Good point. Is it really that important?"

"Mrs. Byers. I can tell that if you had already been awake for a while that you'd be realizing what I'm telling you, so I'm going to narrow it down and I'm sorry if I seem disrespectful but… bad men. And that's just one problem."

"You've gotta be shitting me."

"Nope, now, get our lil buddies awake and get your asses to Murray's as soon as possible. And maybe bring Will's friend Luis, we might need him."

When El and Will visited last month, they brought Luis along, and he told them about his powers, and showed them to them.

"We'll be there in an hour."